

***The Daily Mail Ideal Home Exhibition 1944-1962:***  
**Representations of the 'Ideal Home' and Domestic Consumption**

**A thesis submitted to Middlesex University  
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## ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates the ideals of home, and their determination, promoted in the representations of the *Daily Mail Ideal Home Exhibition* during the period 1944 to 1962 in order to explore how, through their dissemination, the Exhibition intervened in the definitions and politics of home.

The thesis discusses popular ideals of home that emerged from the circumstances created by the Second World War. It situates the *Ideal Home Exhibition* in the immediate postwar exhibition context in order to reveal the relationship of the Exhibition to issues of design and the commercial interests of its exhibitors. The Exhibition is discussed as a business, assessing the objectives of the organisers and the nature of the 'audience' it attracted. The representations made by the Exhibition, particularly those in the 'Village of Ideal Homes' are examined in order to identify historical shifts in ideals of home in relation to housing design and the issues and political objectives of postwar reconstruction. It is then discussed as an intervention in the development of postwar consumerism, and as an intervention in the rise in postwar owner-occupancy. Finally, the Exhibition's representations are discussed in relation to its ideological address of nationalism, class and gender, and their construction of the 'ideal family' as the occupants of the 'ideal home'.

The thesis questions the notion that the Exhibition had an ideal of home, and suggests that instead it was constructed from ideologies of home. The Exhibition is seen as an ideological apparatus that promoted ideals of consumption and property ownership through an address of class hegemony.

## CONTENTS

Introduction Page 1

### **PART ONE: THE CONTEXT OF THE EXHIBITION**

#### **The Historical Context of the Exhibition and Ideals of Home**

Chapter One: Page 32

The Second World War and Determinants of Postwar Ideals of Home

Chapter Two: Page 57

The Immediate Postwar Exhibition Context

#### **The Exhibition as a Business**

Chapter Three: Page 80

The Business Aims and Organisation - The Lewis Report

Chapter Four: Page 101

Market Research and Attendance Statistics

### **PART TWO: THE IDEOLOGICAL REPRESENTATIONS OF THE EXHIBITION**

#### **The Village of Ideal Homes and Representations of the Ideal Home**

Chapter Five: Page 117

The Village of Ideal Homes and Postwar Reconstruction

Chapter Six: Page 153

Models for Postwar Consumers

**The Exhibition and its Political Address**

Chapter Seven: Page 196

'An Ideal Home is a Home you Own'

Chapter Eight: Page 226

An Englishman's Home ...

Conclusion: Page 267

Appendix 1 Page 291

Attendance Figures

Sources of illustrations Page 293

Bibliography Page 296

## ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure 1: Plan of <i>Britain Can Make It</i> Exhibition.	Page 75
Figure 2: Plan of 1951 <i>Daily Mail Ideal Home Exhibition</i> Grand Hall.	Page 75
Figure 3: Graph of attendance at the Exhibition 1947-1975.	Page 104
Figure 4: Graph of attendance at the Exhibition by social class 1957 and 1961.	Page 106
Figure 5: Graph of attendance at the Exhibition of men and women.	Page 107
Figure 6: Graph of attendance at the Exhibition by age.	Page 108
Figure 7: Graph of public interest in various aspects of the Exhibition.	Page 110
Figure 8: Graph of monthly average sales of television sets 1949-1957.	Page 114
Figure 9: Graph of monthly average expenditure on refrigerators 1949-1957.	Page 115
Figure 10: Graph of monthly average registration of new cars 1949-1957.	Page 116
Illustration 1: 1948 Experimental two-story 'Aluminium House'.	Page 129
Illustration 2: The 1947 'Scottwood House'.	Page 130
Illustration 3: The 1947 'Scottwood House' kitchen.	Page 130
Illustration 4: The 1947 'Scottwood House' kitchen.	Page 130
Illustration 5: Advertisement for the 1947 'Tarren-Newland House'.	Page 131
Illustration 6: Double page of <i>Woman's Journal</i> on furnishing the 'Wates' House'.	Page 131
Illustration 7: The 1948 'Traditional House'.	Page 140
Illustration 8: The 1951 'W.I. House' parlour.	Page 146
Illustration 9: The 1951 'W.I. House' kitchen.	Page 146
Illustration 10: Kitchen layouts proposed in the Dudley Report.	Page 147
Illustration 11: Pleydell-Bouverie's plans of 'the house that women want'.	Page 147
Illustration 12: The ground floor plan of the 1951 W.I. House.	Page 149

Illustration 13: 1951 Exhibition Catalogue advertisement for the Jackson 'Giant' Cooker.	Page 149
Illustration 14: 1951 Exhibition Catalogue advertisement for Morris of Glasgow.	Page 156
Illustration 15: The Lounge of the 1951 'Berg House'.	Page 156
Illustration 16: Kitchen of the 1951 'Unity House'	Page 160
Illustration 17: The 1951 <i>Daily Mail</i> 'Ideal Home Kitchen'.	Page 160
Illustration 18: The 1953 'Davis House'.	Page 170
Illustration 19: Plan of the 1953 'Davis House'.	Page 170
Illustration: 20 <i>Daily Mail</i> Competition for the 1953 Exhibition.	Page 174
Illustration 21: Richard Hamilton's <i>Just What Is It That Makes Today's Homes So Different, So Appealing?</i>	Page 174
Illustration 22: Kitchen in the 'House of the Future'.	Page 175
Illustration 23: Lounge in the 'House of the Future'.	Page 175
Illustration 24: Eating bar in the 1956 'Berg Surrey House'.	Page 178
Illustration 25: Plan of the 'Berg Surrey House'.	Page 178
Illustration 26: 'Allday' windows of the 1956 'Berg Surrey House'.	Page 179
Illustration 27: 1959 Exhibition Catalogue advertisement for the 'Unity Britannia Mews'	Page 179
Illustration 28: <i>Woman's Realm</i> interiors for the 'Unity Britannia Mews'.	Page 183
Illustration 29: <i>Woman's Realm</i> interiors for the 'Unity Britannia Mews'.	Page 183
Illustration 30: No expense spared kitchen designed by <i>Ideal Home</i> magazine. 1961	Page 184
Illustration 31: Dining-room of the 1959 'Davis House' designed by <i>Woman's Own</i> .	Page 184
Illustration 32: Kitchen of the 1958 'Crouch House' designed by <i>Woman's Own</i> .	Page 190
Illustration 33: View of the 'Village' in 1957.	Page 209
Illustration 34: View of the 'Village' in 1957, opposite side.	Page 209

Illustration 35: Plan of the 1961 'Berg Ranch House'.	Page 213
Illustration 36: Dining area and kitchen of the 1961 'Berg Ranch House'.	Page 213
Figure 11: The firms or buildings represented at the Exhibition.	Page 215
Illustration 37: Interior of the 1957 'Crouch Convertible House'.	Page 219
Illustration 38: View of the 'Village of Beginning Again' in 1947.	Page 225
Illustration 39: 'Palace of Fontainebleau' 1958 'Golden Jubilee' Exhibition	Page 225
Illustration 40: Close-up of the decorative mural of the opening of the 1947 Exhibition.	Page 228
Illustration 41: 'An Englishman's home is his castle' spectacle of 1956 Exhibition.	Page 228
Illustration 42: Catalogue drawing of the 'Tudor' village in 1962 Exhibition gardens.	Page 238
Illustration 43: The 1960 'Georgian House' Exhibition spectacle.	Page 238
Illustration 44: James Gardiner's 1948 design for 'The Seven Ages of Woman'.	Page 252
Illustration 45: Gas exhibit at 'The Seven Ages of Woman'.	Page 252

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**ABBREVIATIONS**

CoID	Council of Industrial Design
ISA	Ideological State Apparatus
W.I.	National Federation of Women's Institutes
W.V.S.	Women's Voluntary Service

## INTRODUCTION

**‘The foundations of the National Glory are set in the homes of the people.’**

This quotation from a speech to the Church Assembly by King George V was adopted by the *Daily Mail Ideal Home Exhibition* as its motto; it has long appeared at the entrance to every annual Exhibition, and in various of its publications<sup>1</sup>. Thus the Exhibition, which is the object of this study, linked hearth and nation, and recognised that homes are more than physical structures: they are personal human environments whose nurture has determining effects on our lives, with consequences for us as individuals and as citizens. Homes are therefore not only a private concern, they have economic and political significance. As Putnam observed, ‘Homes are made from material, social and cultural resources and are bound up in the relationships which sustain those resources. The selection and appropriation of housing and commodities produced for domestic consumption, and the order and value given to domestic activities have more than private significance; they are key constituents of our economic and social order’ (Putnam in Putnam & Newton eds. 1990: 7).

Because homes are material, social and cultural environments that position the domestic domain in a network of commercial, social, and national interests, they involve a multiplicity of ideals that correspond to the *variety of elements of which homes are* composed. Consequently these ideals range from matters of personal taste, to cultural values, to social expectation. This complexity involved in the object of study is further intensified by the fact that the notion of ‘ideal’, also in the Exhibition’s title, likewise involves a variety of connotations. It can indicate: that something is well suited for its purpose; that something is an object of aspiration; or that something is derived from an ideological position. ‘Ideal’ can also indicate a set of abstracted qualities combined

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<sup>1</sup> For example, *The Daily Mail Ideal Home Exhibition* commemorative publication for the Golden Jubilee 1958 and Exhibition Catalogue 1958: 57

together to make a perfect example, and it can imply such an eradication of imperfections as to be almost utopian. Such ideals are not created in a vacuum; they are determined, and result from the exercise of the power of definition. As a consequence an examination of the agencies of definition becomes part of an analysis of these ideals.

The title of the *Daily Mail Ideal Home Exhibition* is thus laden with a rich complexity of potential references that span from the personal to the political, from the functional to the aesthetic, from the material to the ideological; and that can be attached to both the Exhibition in general and individual exhibits. There are many ways, therefore, in which the Exhibition could be examined. It could be examined from a feminist perspective considering how it addressed women, how women were positioned by the Exhibition in a particular relationship to the home, how women were represented, and how they were absent. It could be discussed in relation to representations of the modern home and therefore to discourses on modernity; it could be discussed in relation to theories of spectacle; theories of desire; or as part of a history of shopping. These are not the concerns of this thesis, although some of them have a place in the discussion. The interest here is to examine what were the ideals of the postwar home that were promoted by the Exhibition, what were the determining forces of the Exhibition's representations and how were they shaped by underlying political ideologies which defined and situated them.

The aim of this research has been to investigate the ideals of home, and their determination, promoted in the representations of the *Daily Mail Ideal Home Exhibition* during the period 1944 to 1962, in order to explore how, through their dissemination, the Exhibition intervened in the definitions and politics of home.

In formal terms the aim of this thesis constitutes a research issue, rather than a research problem or hypothesis (Bassey 1999: 66). The discussion will explain why the Exhibition, despite its claims, did not intervene in terms of design aesthetics and what was sometimes termed at the time 'good design'. It will show how instead the Exhibition intervened in the areas of: promoting domestic consumption, which it related to the concept of labour-

saving; in promoting home ownership; and in positioning the home in relation to significations of class, and national identity. This view could be summed up by saying; the Exhibition did not so much promote an ideal of home as ideologies of home. Fundamentally this thesis is a study of representation. It sets out to show what determined the material representations of the Exhibition and to demonstrate how they acted as ideological signifiers. To do this, the discussion draws on theories of production and consumption, of representation and feminist analysis, of hegemony and the concept of ideological apparatus.

### **The Object of Study**

The *Ideal Home Exhibition* was first held at Olympia in 1908 as a publicity event for the *Daily Mail* newspaper which had been launched twelve years earlier in 1896. The competition that had developed with its rival, the *Daily Express*, resulted in the newspaper adopting a number of projects to form a highly active approach to publicity. Exhibitions were part of this publicity drive. For example, the *Daily Mail* also held a large lace exhibition in London shortly before the first *Ideal Home Exhibition*. With its focus on all aspects of the home, the *Ideal Home Exhibition* was the first of its kind, and was deemed a great success. Unlike today's Exhibitions its concerns were not entirely consumerist. The opening Exhibition, for example, had demonstrations of how to bath a baby, and some of this improving didacticism may have been located in discourses that suggested that the problems of national degeneracy were originating in working class homes. After the success of this Exhibition, a further six were held more or less biannually - although interrupted by the First World War - until it became a regular annual event from 1922<sup>2</sup>. Since then, apart from the further interruption caused by the Second World War, the Exhibition has continued to be held each year up to the present time, though it moved twenty years ago from Olympia to Earls Court. Following the Second World War the

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<sup>2</sup> Exhibitions were held in 1908, 1910, 1912, 1913, 1920, 1922 and then annually until 1939. There was also an Exhibition in 1921, but this was a National Efficiency Exhibition - a particular concern of Lord Northcliff, the proprietor.

Exhibition reopened in 1947. On one Saturday<sup>3</sup> the attendance exceeded seventy-six thousand people, a figure three times the number achieved by the *Britain Can Make It* exhibition a year earlier<sup>4</sup>. By 1948 twenty-five Exhibitions had been staged, and a total of eleven million people had attended since its inception. For twenty years after the war total attendances exceeded a million people every year; with the Exhibition reaching its zenith during the late fifties. The *Daily Mail* claimed that the annual attendance figures represented one in every forty-six of the British adult population<sup>5</sup>, but as the bulk of those attending came from the Home Counties the proportion would have been considerably higher in that region. Thus during the period examined here, the annual Exhibition had become established as a popularly recognised major institution in English - rather than British, given its Southern location - domestic life.

The Exhibition has always been concerned with the home in the widest sense featuring items that ranged from the material dwelling to those required for the many activities of domestic life. It grew in scale over the years but, with a number of regular sections of display, it retained an essential continuity of identity. These regular Exhibition sections included example houses arranged as a 'Village of Ideal Homes', labour-saving devices, food and cookery, fashion, furnishing, decoration, leisure, show gardens, and much more. Fundamentally the Exhibition was a commercial outlet that provided a showcase for manufacturers and retailers. Nevertheless, as an exhibition it set out to entertain through spectacle. From the start a didactic voice was discernible, and educational displays have been a common feature. The relations between such issues as the commercial realities, questions of display, and the ideologies of the organisers are therefore important determinants of the Exhibition's production, mediation and reception.

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<sup>3</sup> 22 March 1947.

<sup>4</sup> *Daily Mail* 31 March 1947: 2.

<sup>5</sup> *Daily Mail* 29 March 1948: 2.

In describing the sections of the Exhibition it is essential to clarify the fact that it was constituted from contributions from two separate sources. Fundamentally, the most important distinction was between those parts of the Exhibition provided by the organisers and those provided by the commercial exhibitors. The main spectacle, which provided a focus of attraction and entertainment, and constituted the theme of the show was wholly determined by the organisers and their designers. Also determined by them were other displays of interest that would also vary from year to year, such as the display of Princess Charlotte's 1816 wedding ball gown shown at the 1955 Exhibition. The 'Village of Ideal Homes', which consisted of a number of fully furnished and complete houses or bungalows, could represent a mixture of provision by both the organisers and by commercial exhibitors. Sometimes there were special buildings commissioned by the organisers or brought in by them as an item of interest. Examples of these would be the 'House of the Future' (1956)<sup>6</sup> or the 'Roof House' (1958)<sup>7</sup> also, in the immediate postwar years, Government departments would display such buildings as old peoples' dwellings or examples of frost-proofing. However, the majority of the houses were exhibits that were provided by building firms and developers, and which represented an advertisement for them to the general public. Control of the furnishing of the dwellings in the 'Village' has, at different times, been exercised by the organisers or by the exhibitors of the houses. Mostly during the period considered here the furnishing was controlled by the organisers of the Exhibition, who employed individuals, including their own staff, or magazines associated with the home or decoration of the home to do the work. Not under the control of the organisers were the stands of the individual exhibitors. These can be divided into major exhibitors and, what might be termed, 'stall holders' who exhibited in a market section of the Exhibition. This market section provided a number of the gadgets, demonstrations, and smaller items for purchase that were popular with the visitors. Though most of the major exhibitors were commercial firms, there were sometimes Government

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<sup>6</sup> See page 176.

<sup>7</sup> See page 121.

displays and official displays from other nations; the latter of which were arranged by the organisers to provide items of interest or to fit in with specific themes.

### **Justification**

The *Ideal Home Exhibition* was demonstrably popular, and achieved such a significant position in the public mind that it inevitably influenced popular perceptions of the home and ideals of home. This was especially the case after the Second World War when, at the height of its popularity, so many changes were taking place in the housing stock, and in the nature of domestic consumption. Despite this the Exhibition has received little academic study. This may be attributable to two factors. First, the organisers of the Exhibition have, until recently, refused to make any of their records available<sup>8</sup>. Second, the design values represented by the Exhibition were not those of postwar Modernism and it has attracted an attitude of disdain from the design and architectural establishments. Reed further argues that the domestic itself has been the subject of repression in modern art and architecture partly as a result of male attitudes to domesticity - including the desire to be concerned with 'something significant' - and partly because the avant-garde to a degree defined itself by 'its opposition to "kitsch," a term identified with the knick-knacks of the middle-class home ...' (Reed 1996: 15). Review comments of the *Architects Journal* provide an example of the rejection of both 'kitsch' and suburban values by the design establishment, '... the designers employed by the housing magazines, who in nearly every case have dolled up the interiors of the houses in the most pretentious, expensive and unbelievable way.' and '... another bedroom in the House in the Sun with decorations by Arthur Fleishmann, interior by Cecil Lewis, of a kind now mercifully rare even at Olympia in March' (*Architects Journal* 14 March 1962: 552 & 559). Although this illustrates how the Exhibition failed to reflect the values of what was termed 'good design', nevertheless it

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<sup>8</sup> This position changed with the appointment of Mr. Ivan Allen as the managing director of Angex, as the organisers were known at that time. (The present name of the company organising the Exhibition is Pinnacle.)

did represent the values of the wider population. It is this reflection of those widely held aspirations that now makes it a subject of academic interest.

The object with which this study is concerned impinges on a number of different areas of academic interest. 'Home' has a multiplicity of connotations that derive from the many different activities, meanings, mental constructions, and aspirations with which it is associated. 'Home' refers, in the first place, to the house and the basic requirement of shelter, as the Exhibition's displays of postwar prefabs testify, yet even these incorporated ideas of efficiency and human activity. They also showed that home can involve ideas about state provision and Government regulation. Because a home is a property it involves ideas of tenure. 'Home' is also a term that refers to relationships and the people with whom we have them, and it therefore refers to the issues involved in concepts of 'household'. How the household uses and relates to the physical building and one another raises issues of layout, function, gender, role, and power. 'Home' can also refer to geographical, social, and historical location, and these can act as signifiers of each other, as the prestige of various postcodes demonstrate, while similar issues can be reflected in the architectural design of the building. 'Home' is both an emotional signifier and bound up with questions of identity, as Madan Sarup wrote:

Many of the connotations of home are condensed in the expression: *Home is where the heart is*. Home is (often) associated with pleasant memories, intimate situations, a place of warmth and protective security amongst parents, brothers and sisters, loved people.

When I think of home I do not think of the expensive commodities I have bought but of the objects I associate with my mother and father ... Particular objects and events become the focus of a contemplative memory (Madan Sarup in Robertson *et al* 1994: 94).

The home is a site of consumption and of technological innovation; it is a place we furnish and decorate. It is thus both a material construct and a product of aspiration, a site of our labour and our imaginings.

The wide variety of displays at the Exhibitions reflected aspects of this breadth. Because of the commercial nature of the Exhibition the exhibits were concerned with the material



aspects of home, the built environment provided by the physical structure of the house or flat together with the potential objects of choice with which the building was decorated and equipped were the main representations in the Exhibition. But the fact that 'home' can include a variety of relationships was not absent as their implications for the material organisations of the home were reflected in some of the displays. The variety of exhibits reflected not only the many meanings of 'home', but also the numerous distinctions that play a part in its constitution and construction like those between: public and private; work and leisure; male and female; modern and traditional; or urban, suburban, and rural. Those other distinctions about which Bourdieu (1984) wrote, that, through cartographies of taste, allowed him to distinguish between class signifiers, were also to be found. Thus the Exhibition, as an object of study, can be related to a number of lines of academic enquiry including: studies of architecture and housing, sociology, gender studies, cultural studies, economic and social history, exhibition studies, and design history.

While there has been extensive academic research and discussion of postwar housing developments, much of this has been concerned with the role of the state provision. There has been less discussion of the private sector, and one aspect of the *Ideal Home Exhibition's* role was its mediation of the ideals of owner-occupancy. Consequently an area of interest in the Exhibition is with it as an intervention into representations of private sector housing, particularly at a time when changes were taking place in patterns of tenure.

In addition to mediating private sector housing, the Exhibition displayed all kinds of goods related to the home and, certainly for a period, acted as a significant intervention in the promotion domestic consumption. According to Bocoock, 'The decade of the 1950's was important in the development of consumption in modern capitalism' as it was then in 'Britain and other European Countries that consumption became more widespread among the general population ...' (Bocoock 1993: 5). The Exhibition had an important role not only in legitimating and encouraging domestic consumption, but also in providing instruction in consumption, through, for example, advising on how items might be combined and appropriated.

## Literature Review

The only major academic study of the *Ideal Home Exhibition* undertaken so far is an unpublished PhD thesis by Deborah Ryan, *The Daily Mail Ideal Home Exhibition and Suburban Modernity, 1908-1951* (University of East London 1995). Ryan has since published a book *The Ideal Home Through the 20th Century* (1997), and a paper *The Empire at Home: The Daily Mail Ideal Home Exhibition and the Imperial Suburb* (Royal Holloway: University of London 1997).

Ryan's main contribution to the study of the *Ideal Home Exhibition* is her PhD thesis, and her periodisation begins with the first Exhibition. She shows its foundation to be set within the context of the publicity strategy of the *Daily Mail* and its creation of a lower middle class audience with a particular attempt to appeal to women readers. Ryan's work bears witness to a considerable amount of research and she describes the early years in some detail. The rest of the thesis is thematic in approach dealing with such issues as: notions of labour-saving, architectural styles, representations of non-English peoples, and two case studies of houses designed by women.

One of Ryan's main concerns is articulated in the title, namely the introduction of the concept which she terms 'suburban modernity'. She gives a detailed review of the debates about Modernism and states her intention to propose the notion of 'suburban modernity'. This concept she describes as combining 'new technologies with new forms of the past' an example of which would be the combination of '... labour-saving appliances, and peculiarly English invented traditions, such as the "Tudorbethan" semi ...' (Ryan 1995: 3). Such a combination brings together new technologies for living, with symbols that articulate the emotional and existential connotations of 'home'. Her intention is to reclaim the suburb from its denigration at the hands of those cultural critics who saw it as outside the modern or as a feminized aspect of modernity.

Ryan gives a detailed discussion of the debates about modernity invoking, amongst others, Benjamin's figure of the flâneur and Baudelaire's essay *The Painter of Modern Life*. Essentially her argument pivots on defining 'modern' in a way that is different from the rational functionalist ideology and aesthetic associated with Modernism or the Modern Movement. She attempts this by drawing on Richard's poem to the suburbs *The Castles on the Ground* (1973)<sup>9</sup> in which he suggests that a variety of values are held in tension. Ryan says:

The Ideal Home Exhibition, I believe, displays a series of polarities, yet negotiates a space between them. These oppositions include: modernity and nostalgia; urban and rural; past and future; masculine and feminine; culture and nature; public and private. Suburban modernity signifies the middle ground where such polarities can come together; contradictions are intrinsic to it (Ryan 1995: 18).

Ryan provides a lengthy discussion of 'Tudorbethan' later in the thesis, although it is difficult to see any significant development of Ian Davis' five ambiguities detailed in *Dunroamin* (to which Ryan refers) namely: strong anchorage in distant past building style linked *with* progressive planning and labour-saving; warm, cosy inward looking accommodation *with* light and air; an expression of individuality *with* communal belonging; the appearance of affluence *but* on a shoestring; and finally, a practical house that hinted at modernity (Oliver *et al* 1981: 79). What Ryan draws attention to is the way the Exhibition represents the mock Tudor semi as up-to-date and, on occasion, alongside modern movement buildings such as that of Wells Coates, thus re-contextualising it amid representations and discourses of progress.

Although some overlap between Ryan's work and this study is implied in the dates of the respective titles, in practice they relate to different periods in the history of the Exhibition. For the most part Ryan's thesis is concerned with the period preceding the First World War and the interwar years. While it is true that her title extends her study to 1951, the reason for this is that it allows her to include reference to the Women's Institute

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<sup>9</sup> Ryan refers to the 1946 edition.

House in a discussion of houses designed by women. Other than this Ryan does not attempt to discuss the postwar period.

Ryan's other academic contribution, her paper, is also not concerned with the period discussed here, but with the interwar period. Its aim is to develop the concept of the 'imperial suburb'. Ryan argues that suburban domesticity was colonised through such devices in the Exhibition's representations as: imperial artefacts displayed in a domestic context; through 'the marketing of food and Empire'; and the use of 'exotic peoples' in displays with imperial overtones (Ryan 1997: 3). Although brief, the paper clearly establishes discourses of Empire in the interwar displays of the Exhibition.

Ryan's book represents the material researched for the thesis and presents it in a more popular way. It is a diachronic description of the Exhibition by decade from its inception to the early nineties. So far as the period discussed in this study is concerned, there is clearly an overlap with Ryan's book. However, the book does not attempt to go beyond brief descriptions of some of the main features or exhibits at the Exhibition, consequently what is presented here is a more detailed and analytic account. This thesis, therefore, studies a period in the life of the *Daily Mail Ideal Home Exhibition*, that has not been previously examined in any depth; and it contributes a discussion of sources previously unexamined in the belief that this sheds light upon the Exhibition's representation and contextualisation of the postwar home and the domestic realm, and the way it intervened in practices of domestic appropriation.

### **Periodisation**

Although the period with which this study is concerned is one that has not been previously considered in depth in relation to the Exhibition, it was a time when the Exhibition was at the height of its popularity, and it was also an important period of change in relation to a number of issues of home and domesticity. For example, it was an important period for: the development of housing in this country; for the development of changes in the pattern of housing tenure; for the development of domestic consumption; for changes that were

taking place in the consumption of domestic space; and for shifts in the nature of the postwar family.

In selecting a specific period for study it is recognised that separating out any discreet period of time into a unit is both an artificial action, and to some extent an arbitrary one. Whatever period is selected, determining causes may take place prior to it, and significant consequences may follow. As Walker points out, even when 'dramatic ruptures and watersheds in human society occur' they may not entirely sever important continuities (Walker 1989: 83). The Second World War was certainly such a rupture, bringing in its wake dramatic social and economic change. So far as the *Ideal Home Exhibition* was concerned, following the outbreak of war, no Exhibitions were held for six years. The first postwar Exhibition of 1947 could have been chosen to mark one formal boundary of the period. However, the Exhibition and its subject matter need to be contextualised, and continuities and breaks examined. For this reason evidence prior to the first postwar Exhibition is considered and the period begins in 1944 so as to include, among other things, the *Daily Mail Book of Post-War Homes* which constituted its own contribution to thinking about postwar housing and the subsequent report *Design for Dwellings* by the Dudley Committee.

The selection of 1962 as the concluding date is perhaps a more arbitrary choice than the opening one. The period covered by the thesis represents the apogee of the Exhibition; it is sufficiently long to trace such important changes as took place, but not so long as to prejudice the material being examined in depth. It has mainly been selected on the basis of the documentary evidence examined. These revealed changes in the Exhibition's representations that that were considered sufficiently important to require inclusion. As the study began with the year that saw the publication of the Dudley Report, so the period ends with the Exhibition closest to the publication of the Parker Morris report late in 1961.

### Sources

One of the main problems facing the researcher is that the organisers of the *Ideal Home Exhibition* did not keep an archive. Indeed during the period covered by this research, the organisers do not appear to have had available all the information for their own running of the Exhibition that would now seem essential for efficient business management<sup>10</sup>. The evidence points to this being the result of the fact that the basic function of the Exhibition was to act as a publicity vehicle for the *Daily Mail* newspaper, with the Exhibition being organised from within the newspaper. Fundamentally, it was the newspaper that was the central object of concern, not the Exhibition. Faced with the absence of a detailed historical archive, and the fact that exhibitions are by their very nature ephemeral events, it has been necessary to combine information gained from a number of primary sources to try and establish something of the nature of what took place.

Sources that have provided information are: the Exhibition Catalogues; an internal report written by Cecil Lewis in 1957; market research reports; news items and articles in the *Daily Mail* newspaper; albums of publicity photographs; articles in other journals associated with exhibits at exhibitions; books of plans of the houses exhibited at the show and published by the *Daily Mail*; newsreel footage; reviews of the Exhibition by other journals; interviews<sup>11</sup>. In addition, though not directly connected with specific Exhibitions sources providing contextual evidence are: the previously mentioned *Daily Mail Book of Post-War Homes* Mrs M. Pleydell-Bouverie published by the *Daily Mail* Exhibition Department; *Daily Mail Ideal Home* year books; Government reports on housing, such as the Dudley report and the Parker Morris report; and other books and articles on home and housing published during the period.

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<sup>10</sup> See Chapter 3.

<sup>11</sup> A complete set of catalogues is held by the organisers, and with the change of the organiser's managing director, material that was thought to be of historical value was donated to the Victoria and Albert Museum. This consists of an incomplete set of catalogues, some written documentation, and the photographic albums.

EXHIBITION CATALOGUES: are one of the main sources providing information about the Exhibition year by year. They are usually about two hundred and fifty pages long (even immediately after the war). In 1947 the Catalogue began with an introduction by Lord Rothermere. In the years that followed there was an unsigned 'Foreward' or 'Welcome to the Exhibition' which outlined a number of the features of that year's show. From 1956 onwards the Catalogues had a signed introduction by the Editor of the *Daily Mail*, the main function of which was to eulogise the Exhibition. In addition to a plan of the Exhibition, the remainder of the contents may be divided into two: there were short articles that described or related to exhibits and features of the Exhibition; second, there were brief descriptions of each of the individual stands. In addition, for the first seven years after the war and one subsequent year, there were articles, some quite lengthy, relating Royalty to issues of home.

The articles that described the show and its exhibits directly always included a description of the theme of the show and of the houses shown in the 'Village of Ideal Homes', there were also usually articles that referred to the garden displays. Other articles, normally about a page in length, tended to relate to specific features of each year's show. Taking 1951 as an example there were articles on: the 'Ideal Home Kitchen'; the 'Ideal Home Book Exhibition'; the Automobile Association; Nestle's 'Playland'; and 'Mr Cube at Home' - about a sugar manufacturing exhibit. The Catalogues for jubilee Exhibitions and especially 1958 - the 'Golden Jubilee' - had articles that provided an overview of the Exhibition's history.

In addition to what was said about the show homes in any introductory material, each of the show homes had a individual description provided by the firm responsible, and these gained in length and detail with the successive years of peacetime. However, the detail given, the form, and style of description varied from exhibiting firm to exhibiting firm. Frequently the show homes were specially furnished as a further item of interest in the Exhibition display, references to this were also often given in the Catalogues.

The texts for the individual stands varied from one to a dozen or so lines giving the basic nature of what the display consisted of from clothes pegs, toys, or furniture, to building materials. The Home Fittings stand in 1951 provides an example of the sparse information that these entries may constitute, 'Kirsch "Sun-Aire" Blinds. Flexible, metal-slatted blinds, providing perfect control over light and air. Manufactured with enclosed head unit and exclusive 'S' shaped slats. An article of beauty for the home, factory or office' (Exhibition Catalogue 1951: 128).

Thus the detailed information provided by the Catalogues centres around the items of spectacle and other noteworthy aspects of the show for which the organisers were responsible, together with descriptions of the 'Village of Ideal Homes'. For although the houses were the exhibits of different firms, they were co-ordinated into a particular setting by the organisers. It is much more difficult to judge the impression given by the independent stands as the only systematic reference to them is the Catalogue entry. The restricted amount of information provided by the Catalogues and the absence of archives has proved to be a major constraint on the way the show could be investigated. As a consequence the focus has centred on that part of the Exhibition provided by the organisers together with the 'Village of Ideal Homes', rather than that contributed by the individual commercial stands and displays.

In order to analyse the material contained in the Catalogues, text from the main articles and the descriptions of the show homes were entered into a specially created text database. With a single field of one record being capable of holding over five hundred words, the database had to be combined with a word processor to find the specific text string. This search method has allowed references ranging from: key descriptive terms; to issues of gender; to style of house design; to be methodically examined as part of an attempt to trace developments, changes, and shifts over time. The approach has been to combine a detailed analysis of the Catalogues with the information that could be gained from the other sources, described below, in order to suggest what were significant features of the



representations made by the Exhibition and to understand why they took their specific form.

**THE LEWIS REPORT:** this is an internal report written in 1957 by a newly appointed senior staff member of Associated Newspapers. It is a substantial if somewhat idiosyncratic document, but it is the only document that gives any information about the business organisation of the Exhibition, or direct evidence of the viewpoint of the organisers. It is thus an important text that allows judgements to be made about the determinants and aims of the Exhibition.

**MARKET RESEARCH REPORTS:** the evidence shows that no market research was conducted by the organisers until the time of the 'Lewis Report'. Regrettably the 1957 market research has not come to light, but its results are referred to by the next piece of research undertaken in 1961 where comparisons were made. Consequently it is probable that little is missing that is not recorded in the 1961 document. This market research is mostly concerned with classifying those who attended the Exhibition according to social class and, to a somewhat lesser extent, their interests in the Exhibition exhibits and their reactions to them. Some further reports relating to the 1970's were also found. Although these are not concerned with the period under examination, they do have some confirmatory value. The market research enables some consideration to be given as to who were the consumers, or audience, of the Exhibition, and their profile can be related to wider figures of patterns of domestic consumption.

**PHOTOGRAPHIC ALBUMS:** for the postwar Exhibitions there is an almost complete series of photographic albums for each year taken for press and publicity purposes. Unfortunately, though I have had sight of them, a large number of these albums are in such urgent need of conservation that they are not yet available for research. Although these are framed by the conventions of press photography and are determined by what was deemed newsworthy - for example many images are more concerned with visiting

celebrities than the exhibits - they provided evidence of the visual form of the Exhibition, the design of the show homes and their interiors, and of some of the other displays.

THE *DAILY MAIL* NEWSPAPER: gave coverage to the Exhibition every year, however the extent of this varied a good deal. The coverage took the form of articles about the Exhibition, of news stories about events that took place, and various competitions and other items used to advertise it. These provide further information about the points of interest in the various Exhibitions; about the spectacles through which the organisers hoped to attract the public; and about some of the publicity stunts used to advertise the Exhibition. In addition to providing descriptions of exhibits, the articles were frequently an expression of the public views of the organisers and contained expressions of their ideological values.

OTHER PRINTED MEDIA: because the Exhibition was a publicity event for the *Daily Mail*, other newspapers normally omit reference to it. However, various women's, home, and interior design magazines, particularly those that played some role in the Exhibition in any given year, do provide coverage. Through photographic spreads and articles they provide further evidence about the furnishing and decor of various of the show homes. The *Daily Mail* also published, in book form, plans of some houses exhibited as well as a number of year books loosely associated with the Exhibition. These give some quite detailed information of certain show homes.

Books and reports of the period that are not directly concerned with the Exhibition but that deal with related subjects, constitute further primary sources. Mrs. Pleydell-Bouverie's book, *The Daily Mail Book of Post-War Homes* written towards the end of the war and published by the Exhibition department of the *Daily Mail*, is of considerable interest. Its purpose appears to have been to fill the gap created by the enforced closure of the Exhibition during the war years. Pleydell-Bouverie's concern was to articulate women's views and to describe the houses 'that women want'. It will be argued in this

thesis that Pleydell-Bouverie drew on some of the same evidence as was used by the official Dudley Report.

In addition to the documentary evidence it had been hoped that it would be possible to gain further evidence from interviews with people who had either worked at or attended the Exhibition. However, the most consistent impression gained was the vagueness of memory. People would speak of the Exhibition in a general way but would have no precise memories, or because they had been on a number of occasions they were uncertain as to the period. For this reason although a number of contacts were made with people including exhibitors, a stand designer, and people who went there, only two formal interviews were undertaken, although the Exhibition was discussed with the others in more general terms.

### **Historiographical and Theoretical Issues**

The use of these various sources reflects the intention to make this study evidence based, and that in itself raises a historiographical issue. Since the 'linguistic turn' in historiographical thinking a number of questions, including those about sources, have been strongly debated. Marwick, in his essay "*A Fetishism of Documents*"?: *The Salience of Source-Based History* (in Kozicki ed. 1993), argues against those who denigrate a source-based approach to history. Callinicos too has taken issue with postmodernism because, like E.P. Thompson (1995), he considers that it is a Marxist understanding that is ultimately under threat. He refers to Joyce's assertion that the advance achieved by postmodernism that historians need to recognise is that the events of the past and their causes are 'indistinguishable' from the discourses, documents and sources used to construct them. He comments that this comes close to Derrida's phrase 'There is nothing outside the text'. His concern is that, 'this means that class exploitation and the oppression of women are texts, not social realities' (Callinicos in Rees ed.1998: 29). The

same would apply to the Holocaust and, with the recent libel trial involving Deborah Lipstadt and her book *Denying the Holocaust*, this is no longer solely an academic debating point<sup>12</sup>. Callinicos argues that despite what they say, such writers in practice have appealed to empirical evidence to support their case and that therefore their position is not, and cannot be, consistently held.

An opposite view is taken by Jenkins (1995) as one of the advocates of the postmodern position, in a book that essentially criticises the approaches of Elton and Carr and champions those of Hayden White and Rorty. Like Hirst he is critical of E.P Thompson. His argument is that the 'traces' found in primary sources which signify the 'once real' are interpreted by the historian from her or his theoretical perspective and the findings then given the status of facts. Effectively the argument is the mirror of the empiricist one, namely that empiricists have to resort to theory in order to construct their representation of events from their sources.

Going beyond the questions of purely historiographical theory, the questioning of documentary evidence as articulating the 'real' is supported by Tagg (1988) in his discussion of photographic evidence. Tagg, who is critical of Barthes 'poignant reassertion of the realist position' in *Camera Lucida* (Tagg 1988: 1), refers to the various photographic techniques that are used in the production of an image, and this constitutes part of his rejection of the notion of photography as a documentary record of 'the Real'. He discusses such forms of documentary photographs as early police criminal photographic records, or those taken to support the case for slum clearance at Quarry Hill. His method is to place them in the context that gave rise to their production, but this is a process that requires an empirical methodology in the form of an extensive use of written historical sources. Gramsci's concept of hegemony, Althusser's theories of Ideological

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<sup>12</sup> The libel action brought by David Irving against Professor Lipstadt and Penguin Books. Irving lost the case and was judged to have denied the Holocaust.

State Apparatuses, and Foucault's discussions of power and power relations are then used to theorise the various data, which are shown to be exemplars of the theories. Although he is critical of the realist position as a construct of bourgeois ideology, Tagg's own work is an example of the way that in practice empirical investigation and theoretical analysis tend to be combined.

Appleby, Hunt and Jacob are willing to recognise that postmodernism has made important criticisms of modernist notions of objectivity but express the need to go beyond Rorty's ironic stance.

In our emphasis on the need for narrative coherence, causal analysis, and social contextualization, as exemplified in our own narratives, we are attempting to go beyond the current negative or ironic judgements about history's role. We as historians are nonetheless making our own aesthetic choices, just as others have chosen comedy, romance, or irony for their writings. We are emphasizing the human need for self-understanding through a coherent narrative of the past and the need of admittedly partial, objective explanations of how the past has worked. In this sense, we have renounced an ironic stance (Appleby *et al* 1995: 228).

They advocate a less absolutist approach than postmodernism which they term 'practical realism'. In so doing they suggest that words are 'neither locked on to the objects of the external world', nor 'simply "in our head"'. The linguistic structure has developed precisely through interaction with the objective world. They recognise 'that there cannot be an exact correspondence between words and what is out there, between the conventions employed in speaking about the world itself and its contents' (Appleby *et al* 1995: 247). Relating these questions about 'signifiers' and 'signifieds' to historians, it is the gap between sources and the interpretation of sources that is the cause of concern. They recognise that the past may only dimly correspond to the imperfect accounts of historians but are willing to accept the tentative and partial nature of those accounts. They argue that postmodernists 'have over dichotomised' de Saussure's insight by advocating a new fluidity to words that allows a potentially infinite number of meanings to a sentence. They liken the adhesion of words to definition to Velcro. '... strong enough to stick if undisturbed, but not so strong that social usage can't peel them off for reattachment elsewhere. To lavish all one's attention on the possibility of personal inventiveness on the

part of those reading a text to the neglect of the probability of shared understanding of words is to distort reality' (Appleby *et al* 1995: 268). They continue by pointing out that one of the ways words shift in meaning or take on new connotations is as a result of experience, and that shared experience results in shared language, 'people living at the same time construct their own lexicons.' They go on to argue that communities of readers build up a 'strong consensus' as to meaning rather than indulging in 'individual idiosyncrasies'. They say:

With this stronger, more self-reflexive and interactive sense of objectivity, historians are more likely to submit to the rules of evidence. Recognising that everyone is situated, hence embedded in cultural perspective, they can use that perspective as a foil against which to project the particularities of the age being studied ... they can admit their cultural fixity, their partial grasp of truth, and still think that in trying to know the world it's best not to divert the lens from the object - as the relativist suggests - but to leave it on and keep trying to clean it (Appleby *et al* 1995: 268).

Terry Eagleton (1991) is more critical of the postmodern position and shares the political concerns voiced by Thompson and Callinicos. He strongly attacks the anti-realist position as represented by Hindess and Hirst:

What is being implicitly challenged by Hindess and Hirst is nothing short of the whole concept of representation. For the idea of representation would suggest that the signified exists prior to its signifier, and is then obediently reflected by it; and this, once more runs against the grain of Saussurean semiotics. But in rightly rejecting an *Empiricist* ideology of representation, they mistakenly believe themselves to have disposed of the notion as such ... The term 'representation' has perfectly valid uses, as the populace, if not some post-Marxists, are well aware, its just a trickier cultural practice than the empiricists used to think (Eagleton, 1991: 210 (emphasis in the original)).

Eagleton argues that the kind of approach adopted by Hindess and Hirst results in the signifier entirely constituting what it signifies. Therefore, he says, rather than having a theory of representation they have ended up with a philosophy of identity. 'Representation or signification depends on a difference between what presents and what is presented: one reason why a photograph of a chipmunk represents a chipmunk is because it is not the actual animal' (Eagleton 1991: 213). Evans argues that it cannot be claimed that 'all texts are essentially the same, that there is no difference, for example between a primary source and a secondary source ...' (Evans 1997: 114). He cites his own account of Jenkins book

saying that if Jenkins wanted to check on what he himself had written he would return to his own work, as a primary source, and not Evans' account of it.

Even though the view here is more in agreement with Eagleton or Evans, the postmodern questioning raises particularly acute issues when the object of study is something as ephemeral as an exhibition. In essence an exhibition is only truly itself when it is populated with visitors. It is not just a series of stands, displays, and spectacles. It is an event which requires participants who read, appropriate, and in other ways 'consume' it. Furthermore no two people's experiences of the Exhibition will have been the same nor will they have brought the same pre-experiences to their engagement with it; and, perhaps most important, what they were engaging with was a physical and visual environment of some considerable scale. The very nature of the sources at present available cannot represent this. The sources are fragmentary, and different sources have had to be brought into relation with each other, and much use has had been made from sources that are verbal. The historiographical debate draws attention to the limitations of what one can claim to represent about the Exhibition from the sources.

Although there is clear disagreement between those who adopt a postmodern view and those who oppose them, there is agreement that what is taken from sources is interpreted from theoretical perspectives. This raises the question as to what theoretical perspectives have been employed here. Some design historians like Hebdige (1988), or Walker (1989) use a model of production and consumption to trace the stages through which an artefact may go. This view seeks to look at an object and its design as referring not so much to its aesthetic qualities as to its place in the economic relations of production and exchange and its role in culture through appropriation. This kind of model identifies different stages namely production, mediation, and consumption, and views each as having their own determinants and as potentially having a determining effect on the other stages. It is basically a Marxist model which relates to the base / superstructure metaphor, but it has its limitations. It does not, for example, allow for psychological theories such as that of desire, or for postmodern theories of consumption driving production, and the notion of

repertoires of choice. It does, however, draw attention to the idea of determination and the fact that there are causes and reasons as to why things take the form they do. This model is used here to the extent that it reveals how the economic interests of the management of Associated Newspapers, who exercised final control over the Exhibition, acted as determinants of it. It also shows how economic considerations underlie many of its representations, and how the Exhibition itself was determined by the changing national economy. However, even the economic forces that bore upon the Exhibition did not all operate in one direction, the situation was more complex. Foucault in particular argues that power and the operation of power is diffuse and that what we have to deal with is a network of power relations. When, for example, the Exhibition is examined in relation to other exhibitions and as a business, Foucault's analysis of power enables the Exhibition to be shown as both controlling and being controlled by its exhibitors through the economic leverage they were able to exert. Another aspect of Foucault's thought relevant to this discussion is the notion of discourse, for the Exhibition promoted a number of discourses around the concept of the home such as the labour-saving home which helped to promote domestic consumption, or there were discourses of family or femininity that were involved in the politics and definitions of gender role.

Feminist analysis has drawn attention to the way women are represented and to the underlying politics of these representations. In many ways the Exhibition was a clear example of a patriarchal form of representation. Except as 'experts' in furnishing the home, the voice of women was notably absent from the material that has been examined here. This discussion has been framed by the two main positive representations of women associated with the Exhibition to draw attention to this overall absence, and it also sets out to discuss, albeit rather briefly the representation of women as an aspect of the Exhibition's political discourse.

The representations made by the Exhibition act as signifiers, and Barthes describes how signs either work as myth e.g. (1973), or through the processes of denotation and connotation e.g. (1977). In his Introduction to *Objects of Desire*, Adrian Forty applies



Barthes' ideas of myth to design saying that, '... design has the capacity to cast myths into an enduring, solid and tangible form, so that they seem to be reality itself' (Forty 1986: 9). In other words the materiality of the object disguises and naturalises the ideological values that have been embedded in its form. Ideological values may therefore be promoted through material form, and a concern of this discussion is to explore how the Exhibition promoted particular ideological positions. As a term, 'ideology' has a wide number of different conceptualisations and definitions that range from 'false consciousness' to 'world view'. Eagleton (1991) notes some sixteen possible definitions, but he concludes his book on the subject by suggesting the usefulness of both a broader and a more specific definition, though he emphasises the need to distinguish between them: 'Very often, it (ideology) refers to the ways in which signs, meanings and values help to reproduce a dominant social power; but it can also denote any significant conjuncture between discourse and political interests' (Eagleton 1991: 221). The very diversity of the Exhibition means that through its many representations a number of different ideological positions were represented: gender ideologies like patriarchy; political ideologies like those of monarchy or empire; design ideologies like those of modernism or traditionalism; not to mention others of class, family, or consumption. This discussion will show how certain positions were represented and promoted and how the Exhibition acted as an ideological apparatus.

The concept of an 'apparatus' is discussed by Althusser (1971) in his essay *Ideology and the State*. He begins with the question of how the reproduction of the forces of production, including labour power, can be maintained in order to sustain the conditions of production. Essential to this is not only the 'reproduction of its "skills" but also the reproduction of its subjection to the ruling ideology or of the "practice" of that ideology ...' (Althusser 1971: 133). He suggests this is achieved particularly through the work of Ideological State Apparatuses, which are distinguished from the public Repressive State Apparatuses of the army, the police, the courts, and the like. Ideological State Apparatuses, which function mainly through reinforcing the ruling ideology, are frequently private and constitute such bodies as: the Church, schools, the family, the media, cultural and sports

institutions (Althusser 1971: 143). 'What is represented in ideology is therefore not the system of the real relations which govern the existence of individuals, but the imaginary relations of those individuals to the real relations in which they live' (Althusser 1971: 165). Ideology is a representation of imaginary relations, but while it may be likened to the Freudian concept of the unconscious, in that it is omnipresent and trans-historical, it always expresses class positions. An important concept in Althusser's view of ideology is that it has material existence. An individual's ideas or beliefs are material in that they are inserted, or inscribed, into material practices which are governed by the particular 'rituals' of the ideological apparatus. Althusser's example is that belief in God results in such actions as attendance at Mass or conformity to other ecclesiastical practices. These actions inscribed into practices can be very much part of the everyday: 'a small mass in a small church, a funeral, a minor match at a sports club, a school day, a political party meeting, etc.' (Althusser 1971: 168). Attendance, or making a small purchase at the *Ideal Home Exhibition* would therefore conform precisely with Althusser's position. Althusser's 'central thesis' is that 'ideology interpellates individuals as subjects' (Althusser 1971: 170). Just as someone turns in response to being hailed in the street, so we are addressed by ideology, and through our responding act of recognition we are constituted as subjects. The result is that: 'caught in this quadruple system of interpellation as subjects, of subjection to the Subject, of universal recognition and of absolute guarantee, the subjects "work", they "work by themselves" in the vast majority of cases ...' (Althusser 1971: 181). The *Ideal Home Exhibition* meets Althusser's description of an ideological apparatus in a number of ways. It is a media and cultural institution as well as being a private one. It is, moreover, closely associated with practices associated with the materiality and ideology of family life. Furthermore, it is a material event that involves a number of 'rituals' of participation, and, it will be argued, mediates specific ideological viewpoints. .

Althusser, according to Eagleton, developed his ideas from Gramsci's concept of hegemony of which Eagleton writes:

Gramsci associates hegemony with the arena of 'civil society', by which he means the whole range of institutions intermediate between state and economy. Privately owned television stations, the family, the boy scout movement, the Methodist church, infant

schools, the British Legion, the *Sun* newspaper: all these would count as hegemonic apparatuses, which bind individuals to the ruling power by consent rather than by coercion (Eagleton 1991: 113).

Not only was the *Ideal Home Exhibition* typical of these examples, many of the institutions mentioned by Eagleton have actually featured in the Exhibition. Eagleton continues by saying that whilst hegemony includes ideology, it is a wider concept concerned with the material context of social practice rather than with abstract 'systems of ideas', and as such it is a dynamic process rather than a totalising concept. 'A lived hegemony is always a process. It is not, except analytically, a system or a structure, it is a realized complex of experience, relationships, and activities, with specific and changing pressures and limits. ... it does not just passively exist as a form of dominance. It has continually to be renewed, recreated, defended, and modified' (Williams 1977: 112). The notion of hegemony, says Raymond Williams, admits to opposition. For it is about how in civil society consent is won through its institutions like: 'schools, families, churches, media and the rest' (Eagleton 1991: 116). The hegemonic position claimed by the Exhibition is reflected in the Catalogue statement that: 'It can fairly be claimed that the *Daily Mail* Ideal Home Exhibition has exercised a most powerful influence upon the national standards of taste and utility as regards residential architecture, interior decoration, furnishing, household appliances and even the laying out of private gardens' (Exhibition Catalogue 1958: 53). Although the Exhibition appeared simply to provide representations of popular aspiration, these very representations were part of the process that determined the formation of the public's ideals. The Exhibition was an ideological apparatus with a significant hegemonic position that legitimated consumption at a time when consumption patterns, and the items of consumption were both undergoing significant shifts. The Exhibition's politics were promoted through the way it acted as a hegemonic apparatus, bringing together through its various representations a number of ideological discourses. When the *Ideal Home Exhibition* adopted the phrase of George V for its motto, with which this discussion begins, 'The foundations of the National Glory are set in the homes of the people' it was, although not conscious of the term, actively espousing a hegemonic role assuming consent to specific ideas of home, nation, and monarchy.

## Thesis Outline

Because the Second World War had such a profound effect on so many aspects of life in this country, the context within which the *Ideal Home Exhibitions* re-opened after the war was significantly different both in material circumstances and popular aspirations regarding the home. The effect of the war on the condition of the housing stock had generated widespread discussion about its future development, and essentially this discussion involved ideals. This popular articulation of ideals constitutes one aspect of the context in which the postwar *Ideal Home Exhibition* was situated, and is, therefore, the focus for the first chapter of this discussion.

Official expression was given to these ideals through the publication of the Dudley Committee's report *Design of Dwellings* in 1944, which played a major role in establishing postwar standards for local authority housing. However, in meeting housing needs, the committee was constrained by the realities of the large number of people who would require housing when the war was over, and in embracing the realities of the situation, the Dudley Committee was not entirely able to express popular desires. The claim to give expression to what people wanted, or more accurately, to what women wanted is found within the pages of Mrs M. Pleydell-Bouverie's *The Daily Mail Book of Post-War Homes* (1944)<sup>13</sup>. Had the *Ideal Home Exhibition* not been closed for the duration of the war, it would have been a natural context in which the wartime interest in housing issues could have been further pursued. The *Ideal Home Exhibition's* contribution to the wartime discussion is therefore represented by Pleydell-Bouverie's book. It is this text therefore that provides the starting point for this thesis, and its importance lies in the fact that not only was it an *Ideal Home Exhibition* Department publication, but that it was an expression of popular housing ideals. The text articulates, or claimed to articulate, the ideals to which a large section of the population aspired. There seems good reason to

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<sup>13</sup> No date is given in the book for publication and Ravetz (1995) cites it as 'No date' (n.d.), however many other texts and the British Library cite it as 1944. Internal evidence suggests that this is correct, and that is the practice that has been adopted here.

believe that the evidence Pleydell-Bouverie received from women's organisations was comparable to that received by the Dudley Committee, and this enables a comparison to be made.

Unlike the Dudley report, Pleydell-Bouverie's text was a campaigning document that sought to create awareness of the poor housing conditions. It was a feminist text urging women to become proactive in the field of housing. This in itself is important because the period that follows is marked by the absence of such a voice so far as the Exhibition is concerned. One of the things that is striking about her proposals is the modesty of her suggestions, by today's standards, which itself sheds light on the housing standards she was addressing. Both Dudley and Pleydell-Bouverie reveal a degree of change in the consumption of domestic space since the Tudor Walters Report of 1919, and both were characterised by practical recommendations designed to facilitate the tasks of daily living. Thus both had a clearly identified position.

When it comes to the Exhibition, nowhere is there a clear statement of criteria by which one may assess how the Exhibition judged what was ideal. Its values and position have to be read off its representations. Thus an essential first step is an assessment of how the Exhibition was determined; why did it take the form it did, and what were the implications for the representations it made? In order to answer this, Chapter Two places the Exhibition in the context of the two main immediate postwar exhibitions; *Britain Can Make It* of 1946, and the *Festival of Britain* held in 1951. Like Pleydell-Bouverie both of these Council of Industrial Design (CoID) exhibitions had a specific agenda, the promotion of 'good design'. An intrinsic strategy in delivering this objective was the selection of exhibits on the basis of design quality. In contrast the *Ideal Home* was a commercial exhibition that needed to attract exhibitors and it was this that is revealed as determinative for its content.

If the *Ideal Home* was essentially a business driven exhibition, what were the business objectives underlying its being staged, and how were these determined by the nature of its

business organisation? These are the concerns of the third chapter. The main evidence examined is the report of an internal review conducted by Cecil Lewis. This chapter first considers Lewis' relationship with the Exhibition, and then examines what light the evidence provided by his report sheds upon the organisation of the Exhibition. Essentially this suggests that the business organisation was determined by the *Ideal Home Exhibition* originating as a publicity vehicle for the *Daily Mail* newspaper. It also indicates that economic objectives were the deciding influence over the management of the Exhibition and its business strategy.

An essential aspect of an exhibition is that it is attended by an 'audience'. Such evidence as the *Ideal Home Exhibition* had about its visitors is examined. The Exhibition attracted a record number of people during the period examined here, and their social profile shows that, while they were not from the wealthiest sections of society, they constituted a desirable market for the Exhibition and its exhibitors. For the postwar growth of the Exhibition was related not only to the housing aspirations that developed from the postwar housing situation, with which the first chapter was concerned, but to the growing economic prosperity and developing consumer boom of the 1950s. However, just as these developments were in the Exhibition's favour so the discussion shows that the eventual erosion of its popularity is related to the advent of commercial television and changes brought about by developments in the retail market.

The argument of this thesis is that the representations of home and ideals of home that were to be found in the Exhibition were consequent upon the business goals of the organisers, their ideological values, and the mediations of their exhibitors. Having contextualised the Exhibition and placed it within an analysis of the business aims of its management, the next section of this study is concerned with an examination of the Exhibition's representations. A key aspect of this was the 'Village of Ideal Homes', in which between four and ten completely constructed and fully furnished dwellings were displayed to the public. The houses were intended to represent real homes with the choices of furniture and fittings that people might make. But they were also intended to be seen

as 'ideal' homes, not representations of everyday taste, so they were presented as exemplars of how to equip, furnish and decorate a home.

This examination of the representations made in the 'Village' begins with the opening Exhibition after the Second World War and considers the period of postwar reconstruction. It was a unique period in the life of the Exhibition because the regulations and policies of the postwar Labour Government acted as major determinants of what was displayed. It was a period when prefabrication was used to construct the urgently needed houses and when public provision not private purchase was the norm. It was an age of austerity when material goods were difficult to obtain. In this situation the Exhibition sought to make goods available, and although the show houses were conceived as egalitarian, the way they were furnished represented the nascent consumerist values of the Exhibition.

As austerity gave way to improvements in the economy, so the potential of the houses in the 'Village' to act as vehicles of display returned. There was a renewed emphasis on the interior furnishing of the show houses, and it is this issue that is explored in Chapter Six. The Exhibition eschewed the use of professional design experts, but the display houses were, nevertheless, didactic. They can be seen as a development of the notion of the model house, but the model is no longer an exemplar for social improvement, it is a model of consumption. Essentially the Exhibition positions the 'ideal home' as a site of domestic consumption; and the argument is, that not only were the various ideals of changing fashion and the developments in domestic goods displayed, but that consumption itself was what was being promoted.

Chapter Seven continues the discussion of the Exhibition in relation to consumption but here the focus is on home ownership. One of the major social changes in Britain during the twentieth century was the shift to private owner-occupancy of domestic property. The *Ideal Home Exhibition* was intrinsically a private enterprise showcase and its displays were in essence an intervention in the changing pattern of housing tenure. Although the

majority of the Exhibition's representations were of individual houses, this chapter shows how the commercial interests of exhibitors resulted in displays that included flats intended for public housing. Private housing developed its own ideals, and while scale is a near universal signifier of status, both bungalows and open-plan interiors are shown to constitute a private development form of this period.

Owner-occupancy was a form of housing tenure that was particularly promoted by the political Right, and the final chapter pursues the theme of the Exhibition's representation of ideals in relation to the wider political issues of, nationalism, class, gender, and the family. While many of the representations of the Exhibition were determined by the exhibitors, the theme and spectacles of the Exhibition were produced by the organisers and many of these are redolent of ideological values. The 'ideal home' is positioned by the Exhibition in a context that links it with an idealised view of Englishness. Frequently Arcadian, the Exhibition constructs a deferential view of society headed by the monarchy in which the interior of the home is the place for women and the abode of idealised families. Thus while the Exhibition represented the 'ideal home' as an object of individual choice and ownership, that people should be encouraged to possess and identify with an 'ideal home' was far more than a private matter.



## **PART ONE: THE CONTEXT OF THE EXHIBITION**

### **THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF THE EXHIBITION AND IDEALS OF HOME**

#### **CHAPTER ONE**

##### **The Second World War and Postwar Ideals of the Home**

The Second World War brought about numerous and profound social and economic changes in Great Britain, as elsewhere in the world, that are well documented (e.g. Burnett 1986, Calder 1969, Hennessy 1993, Johnson (ed.) 1994, Marwick 1996, Sked and Cook 1979). Not least to be affected by these changes were issues to do with housing and the home, with the single most important factor being the large scale destruction of the housing stock. This was particularly concentrated in some areas where, for example, one London East End borough had forty per cent of its dwellings destroyed or severely damaged, and in another borough seventy-five per cent, of homes were damaged (Bullock 1987: 73). The election of the 1945 Labour Government and the launching of the Welfare State was a manifestation of an underlying desire to build a new and better Britain on the ruins of the old. An aspiration that included the wish to replace the, sometimes, appalling housing conditions of the pre-war period. Probably for many people the dream of improvement after the war made more tolerable the difficult, poor, or even squalid circumstances with which many had to contend. Certainly the Dudley Committee was aware that women who had become factory workers as part of the war effort had encountered standards of lighting and heating at work that were not enjoyed in the home; and that this experience was determinant of a desire for change and improvement (*Design of Dwellings* 1944: 9).

The war was deeply destructive of families, homes and houses, and it is important to recognise the degree of devastation suffered in the United Kingdom and its implications for the development of postwar planning, housing, and the home. Terms like 'Coventrated' and the 'Blitz' signified the immense and concentrated urban destruction brought about by the bombing. The flying bomb attacks that began in the middle of 1944

were even more destructive in their power than conventional air-raids, if more dispersed and random in the site of their impact. Families were split: by the bombing; by evacuation; by being called-up for military service or war work; by having troops or foreign service-personnel billeted on them; or providing shelter for another family. For many, even when they had reasonable accommodation, much of what was normally signified by 'home' had to be suspended.

As the war developed the housing situation became increasingly desperate, by the end some 475,000 dwellings had either been destroyed or rendered uninhabitable. It was clear that any return to normality would require a major re-building program and as the fear of defeat receded and hopes of victory increased, both speculation and aspirations about the future course of housing developed. Whatever the private and individual aspirations for improvement the very degree of destruction brought about by enemy bombing meant that questions of housing were much to the fore in the public mind. Bullock says that official consideration of the problems involved in the massive task of reconstruction can be traced back to various ministries in the early 1940's which culminated 'in a number of important advances in the spring of 1942' (Bullock 1897: 74). These included: Lord Reith's campaign to establish a single ministry with overall responsibility for planning; the appointment of Abercrombie and Forshaw, who prepared the reconstruction plan for London; the establishment of the Burt Committee on emergency postwar housing provision; and the Dudley Committee on housing standards.

These official considerations were accompanied by widespread public interest, debate, and media discussion. Women's and other popular magazines like *Picture Post*, and *Ideal Home*<sup>1</sup> printed articles, on the subject, including ones contributed by well know

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<sup>1</sup> The magazine *Ideal Home* is not connected with the *Daily Mail Ideal Home Exhibition* as it is published by IPC a rival of Associated Newspapers.

architectural writers. In addition there were broadcasts, public lectures, exhibitions, and a number of books about housing after the war.

The *Ideal Home Exhibition* was not able to contribute to the interest in housing issues because, like many other events, it was closed for the duration of the war. There was concern about the danger of bombing to the public, and there were restrictions on materials and labour. Denied the possibility of holding an Exhibition, the *Daily Mail* added to the books on housing with the publication of the *Daily Mail Book of Post-War Homes* by Mrs Michael Pleydell-Bouverie. The Exhibition Department of Associated Newspapers published it in 1944, and the book represented the main contribution of the Exhibition Department to the debates about housing and the home prior to the first postwar Exhibition of 1947. With the impossibility of holding any Exhibitions during the war years, and with the high degree of public interest in a subject it considered its own, the publication of a book was a natural response for the newspaper. The result was a substantial book for a wartime publication, illustrated as it was, with photographs or diagrams on almost every one of its one hundred and sixty pages. The link between the newspaper, public aspirations for improved housing, and the tradition of the Exhibition was achieved by a number of references in the text, especially in the concluding chapter, that extolled the Exhibition.

The *Ideal Home Exhibition* involves a fusion of specific historic and cultural conceptions of 'home' with the equally historically relative material structures of houses and domestic items combined to meet popular aspiration and create desire. The period of Second World War and that which followed was by the very nature of the events of the war fertile for the production of dreams, desires and aspirations for homes and houses. The aim of this opening chapter is to contextualise the postwar *Daily Mail Ideal Home Exhibitions*, first in relation to the ideals expressed in popular aspirations regarding homes and housing; and second in relation to what might be described as the 'official ideals' articulated in the Dudley Report - where popular aspiration was tempered with the

need to meet the limitations of the practical considerations involved in suggesting standards for local authority provision. Essentially the aim is to examine the ideals to which people aspired at the end of the Second World War. The nature of people's aspirations at the time is important, for one sense of the term 'ideal' in the Exhibition title is that of aspiration. As a commercial exposition that promoted consumption, the creation of desire was fundamentally important to its economic success; it was the gap between the material reality of people's actual circumstances and their aspirations that created the space for desire.

The desires of people in relation to the home at the end of the war will be explored through an examination of Mrs Michael Pleydell-Bouverie's book. The primary concern of the book was with an articulation of ideals for the design of postwar houses and, in particular, it related these ideals to the views expressed by women; for, in large bold type on its title page the book stated that it was 'based on the ideas and opinions of the women of Britain'. Although other more general year books were later published by the *Daily Mail*, because it set out to argue for a particular view, it was the most sustained text of the period that related the *Daily Mail* and the Exhibition with issues of design. The book should be regarded as a feminist text. It adopted a strong and positive view of the role of women and of their opinions on housing issues. It set out to give them a voice, and to encourage them to participate in decision making.

There are a numbers of points of interest here. First, it represented the main intervention by the Exhibition in the debate about postwar housing. Second, it described clearly the poor housing and domestic standards which were the lot of many, persuasively arguing a case for change and improvement. Third, the ideals it articulated give some indication of the ideals of which the Exhibition's public may have dreamed in the immediate postwar period. Fourth, it advocated strongly the role of private enterprise - not the immediate political choice of the postwar of the Labour Government, but the underlying value of the *Daily Mail* and the Exhibition. Fifth, as will be argued below, it seems to have drawn on

some of the same, or similar, evidence as the influential Dudley Committee but had the freedom to argue for a more idealised position. This reveals the divergence between the ‘official ideals’ advocated by the Committee, and the aspirations of the general populace, at least as articulated by Pleydell-Bouverie.

Mrs Pleydell-Bouverie began her career in Fleet Street, then she became assistant editor on a film magazine, and subsequently worked in the film industry first in casting then on publicity. Later, she started her own publicity firm, which she ran until the outbreak of war.<sup>2</sup> She was described in the book as ‘a leading figure in a number of women’s organisations’. This is important because during the war many such organisations were involved in processes of consultation about their members’ desires and needs in terms of house design and provision. She is described in a biographical note as ‘an authority on housing’. It is less clear in what way she had any expertise in this area, but it is true that she continued a serious interest in the subject after the war when she formed the House Building Industries Standing Committee,<sup>3</sup> with the aim of building thirty pairs of demonstration houses constructed by private enterprise.

The book stated that the aims of the *Daily Mail* in producing it were threefold:

1. To co-ordinate all the opinions which women have expressed;
2. To arouse the interest of those other women who have not yet contributed their views, and to impress on them the need for active interest;
3. To indicate briefly what Industry and the Public authorities are planning for the future.

These aims were headed ‘The Daily Mail and the Home’, showing clearly how the *Daily Mail* felt able to claim a special position in relation to housing and the home as the following remarks which concluded the aims show:

It is also hoped that this book may serve as a useful guide to those in Industry and Authority who have had neither the time nor the facilities for reading the many reports which have been privately circulated and which indicate what women expect to find in their Ideal Post-war Home (Pleydell-Bouverie 1944:13).

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<sup>2</sup> Pleydell-Bouverie is the family name of the Earls of Radnor, a member of which had interest in aspects of the construction industry (although it has not been possible to confirm a link).

<sup>3</sup> The committee brought together all the industries supplying materials and goods for building houses and included representatives of the RIBA.

Though the book provides evidence from the work of a number of local authorities and others, the particular interest here is its claim to articulate the wishes of ordinary people. The sources which Pleydell-Bouverie used to make this claim will be discussed below where it will be argued that she used some of the evidence, or some evidence similar to that, received by the Dudley Committee. Her access to this may have been enabled by the role she played in the women's organisations of which she was a member. She also contacted many women through her extensive travels round the country during the war, and the relation of these travels to her researches for the book will also be discussed.

In her findings Pleydell-Bouverie highlighted the fact that 90.2 % of women expressed a preference for living in a house or bungalow. She said younger women were found to be proportionately more in favour of flats but even then, according to the Women's Advisory Housing Council report, only 14 % voted in favour of flats (possibly, it was thought, because these women considered they might find themselves having to be self-supporting after the war). The strongly expressed preference for a house rather than a flat is important because of the prominence of flats in the postwar building programs. The desire for a house was reinforced by an even greater number of respondents wanting a garden. 'The overwhelming desire of women for HOUSES in suburb, small town or country is emphasised by their general desire (99%) for a private garden' (Pleydell-Bouverie 1944: 29 (emphasised in original)). She quoted with approval the Town and Country Planning Association: '...The public garden is no real substitute for the small private garden ... you have no personal right over it, you cannot do anything with it, you have no privacy in it' (Pleydell-Bouverie 1944: 29 (omissions in original)).

Both Pleydell-Bouverie and the Dudley Committee recognised the desire for privacy as one of the factors in the desire for a house. One point that Pleydell-Bouverie made in explaining the desire for privacy is of interest. She wrote: 'although communal living has become so general during the war, the British people do not desire it as a peace-time

regime and all are anxious to get back to their individual homes where, with their families, they can find personal freedom and refuge from their fellow humans and “be themselves.” This is followed by a quotation from the Town and Country Planning Association, ‘True family life is impossible without a reasonable degree of privacy and independence.’ She then goes on to state that such views were supported by her research: ‘The community life of which everyone has had experience to some degree or other in this war, (*sic*) has not endeared or recommended itself as a permanent state of affairs, as can be seen by remarks made by girls in the services, and factories, by evacuated families and those on whom they have been billeted’ (Pleydell-Bouverie 1944: 19). This reaction, apparently resulting from enforced communal living occasioned by the war, contrasts significantly with the aspirations of the socialist communal living experiments suggested by some ‘Modern Movement’ architects, or the earlier feminist experiments concerned with catering and laundering such as those discussed by Dolores Hayden (1981) and Ruth Schwartz Cowan (1989). Indeed the Women’s Advisory Council investigation found that only 2.6% of younger women viewed either communal laundry or restaurant facilities positively (Pleydell-Bouverie 1944: 86). This represents one of the points of difference between the Dudley Report and Pleydell-Bouverie, for the report stated:

There is still a good deal of prejudice among tenants against the communal system, but we believe that this is largely due to the fact that relatively few of them have ever had the use of a well-designed modern communal laundry. In our view the communal laundry offers the best line of future progress and we have, accordingly, examined in some detail a number of examples ....’ (*Design of Dwellings* 1944: 22).

Although the vast majority of women wanted a house, it was not just any house, both Pleydell-Bouverie and the Dudley Report condemned the ‘monotonous’ developments of the pre-war period; and Pleydell-Bouverie considered that neither the products of piecemeal speculative building nor the small local authority pre-war ‘semi’ would be adequate<sup>4</sup>. She described the desire both for aesthetically pleasing layouts, and that a

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<sup>4</sup> According to Dudley, Tudor Walters significantly underestimated the number of houses to be built by a factor of five. Between the wars one million local authority houses were built and not the two hundred thousand envisaged by Tudor Walters. Tudor Walters had therefore anticipated that new building would

variety of needs should be catered for: women's bachelor accommodation, accommodation for old people, houses for newly married and elderly couples, and houses to accommodate families of a variety of sizes.

There is a something of an anti-city tone to her writing, for example in discussing where people wanted to live, Pleydell-Bouverie reported the findings of the Women's Advisory Council report - which showed that fifty-two per cent wanted to live in the suburbs or a small town, thirty per cent in the country, and seventeen per cent in a city. Her opening paragraph on the subject referred to 'congested' conditions, 'cramped' accommodation, 'limited' outlooks and means of exercise, and the 'dreary' prospects of the 'smoke laden' city. She supported her view by quoting from a report of the Royal College of Physicians about housing and health, and from the Urban District Councils Association, and the Town and Country Planning Association (Pleydell-Bouverie 1944: 25). From these quotations she argued that dwellings should not be built at more than '12 to the acre (whether they be houses, flats or tenements)'.

Having established the principle that women wanted houses, Pleydell-Bouverie went on to describe in more detail 'The House That Women Want' (Pleydell-Bouverie 1944: 22). The main concerns she discussed were how housing design affected women's lives through the standards of space provision and facilities. Drawing on the data she had obtained, she suggested space standards with the ideal overall dimension being not less than 1000 superficial square feet - 110 for the kitchen, 200 for the living-room or 310 for a combined room. The bedrooms were to measure 150, 110 and 70 (preferably 90) square feet respectively. These overall dimension were more than that specified by the Dudley Report which proposed 900 square feet. The Dudley Report proposed similar bedroom sizes for the first two bedrooms but restricted the third bedroom to 65 square feet. It is

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constitute an extension of existing communities. Instead, pre-war building had grown to produce the monotonous developments criticised by Pleydell-Bouverie and Dudley.



unlikely that Pleydell-Bouverie would have found this acceptable. She quoted the Royal College of Physicians as saying, ‘no room used for sleeping should be less than 100 square feet’,<sup>5</sup> and she felt that if a child (if not two) were using the room, there must be sufficient space for study and for those items of furniture that would help develop good habits in caring for appearance and hygiene (Pleydell-Bouverie 1944: 58). Furthermore, the space provision she suggested in relation to bedrooms was also concerned with issues to do with saving labour; given the space requirements of the various items of bedroom furniture, a spacious room was considered to facilitate significantly the task of cleaning.

The concerns with standards of building and space were for the most part a matter of improving or upgrading the standards of the interwar period. It was the kitchen and its relation to the spaces provided for eating, as well as other domestic tasks like laundering and bathing, where most of the new thinking in both Pleydell-Bouverie and Dudley were concentrated. Discussion of these issues was not itself new, they are considered at some length in the Tudor Wallets Report written at the end of the First World War<sup>6</sup>. Then the main determining factor in planning the house design of these spaces was the necessity to use the same source of heat for both cooking and space heating. This resulted in the pre-war plan of: scullery, kitchen / living-room, and parlour.

Pleydell-Bouverie stated that her researches showed that what women wanted was:

1. Space in which to prepare, cook food and wash-up - *the kitchen*.
2. Space in which to have meals - *Dining section*.
3. Space in which the family can mingle - *Living section*.
4. Space in which to entertain, or be quiet and away from the rest of the household when occasions demands - *Sitting section*.

(Pleydell-Bouverie 1944: 45)

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<sup>5</sup> So far as health issues are concerned, the Dudley Committee had medical opinion represented in its membership.

<sup>6</sup> It is evident that working-class occupants generally are more and more wishful to eliminate from the living-room the dirty work and particularly the cooking of meals. ... The tendency is to require a scullery in which the cooking, washing up and all other similar work is carried on. The kitchen becomes the living-room in the ordinary sense, which may be kept for use as a sitting-room, as a meal room, and for the cleaner activities of the family (Tudor Walters Report 1918: 25).

In apportioning these areas, 64% of women with families wanted the space allocated as: kitchen, living-dining-room, sitting-room. A smaller number, 20%, wanted a combined big kitchen and living-room, and a sitting-room. She mentioned that if the living-room was to be separate from the kitchen, women were 'anxious' for a serving hatch to be installed. She also commented that the provision of a sitting-room 'may have a deep social significance', and gave one woman's description of the needs of the older girls in the family as evidence.

The eight requirements of what Pleydell-Bouverie described as 'The Housewife's Dream Kitchen' were:

1. That it be planned and fitted for systematic and organised use.
2. More built-in cupboards.
3. A refrigerator - in addition to, not as replacement for, the larder<sup>7</sup>.
4. A sink with two draining boards the right height for the average woman<sup>8</sup>.
5. Good ventilation.
6. Space for a central work table.
7. Adequate light.
8. Adequate draught proofing.

A refrigerator was desired by 97% of the respondents to the questionnaires, and it was seen as an important labour-saving item as were a number of kitchen and service provisions. Fitted cupboards were recommended for all rooms, as were electric fires except in the living-room and kitchen. The elimination of long corridors, picture rails, black leaded grates, brass taps, banisters, the kitchen range, and a reduction in the number of steps were further suggestions to save labour.

Laundry requirements were not covered by any of these proposals, however, like the Dudley Committee, Pleydell-Bouverie argued for the provision of a washhouse-utility-room (though she thought 'utility-room' an inappropriate name to carry forward into a

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<sup>7</sup> This contrasts with Denby's 1939 exhibit which assumed daily food shopping and used the refrigerator for over night storage.

<sup>8</sup> Pleydell-Bouverie suggested 35". Apparently this was a compromise between some experts who suggested 34" and others who suggested 36".

new era). She said that any architect who did not make adequate provision in this respect 'should be condemned to cope with a regular weekly family wash in the restricted space he imagines adequate' (Pleydell-Bouverie 1944: 55). The recommendation of the Dudley Committee that the utility-room should be part of the plan of normal housing was an important one, even if it was a proposal that was for long 'honoured in the breach'.

Regarding the facilities in the rest of the house, Pleydell-Bouverie said what women wanted in the living-room was an open fire with a back boiler to heat water. They also would have preferred the room to have French doors leading to the garden - a small garden back and front was also preferred. Among the 'refinements' required were: specially placed lighting and power points in living, and sitting-rooms; an electronic immersion or gas heater as an alternative for water heating; in the bath room (83% of the women questioned stated that they wanted the bathroom upstairs) built-in bath, soap tray, heated towel rail, and 'noiseless' flush toilet. These, and the other items mentioned, were all directly concerned with easing the practicalities and tasks of living and may be contrasted with the provisions the Dudley Committee cited as normal before the war:

The equipment normally provided in the inter-war dwelling consisted of a bath in the bathroom, a water closet, a sink, one draining board, a copper in the scullery, a coal range in the living room and latterly a cooker in the scullery (where services were available), a dresser either in the living-room or scullery, a built-in ventilated larder and about 20 sq. ft. of shelving, some local authorities added a wash basin in the bathroom. Hot water was sometimes provided by a circulating system from the back boiler of the range, but more often the only hot water supply was from the copper to the bath by means of gravitation feed or pump (*Design of Dwellings* 1944: 28).

This evidence shows that the task of postwar reconstruction was more than a matter of replacing damaged or destroyed housing stock, it was also a matter of providing houses to a specification that would make easier the tasks of daily living. The ideals that are articulated in Pleydell-Bouverie's book, and that were enshrined in the recommendations of the Dudley report, and which the surveys showed were desired by so many, were

practical ideals concerned with improving the burden of day to day housework and family life rather than offering an addition of refinement or elegance<sup>9</sup>.

Nevertheless one ideal argued for by the Dudley Report as being of 'paramount importance' was 'good design'. However, this was defined as, 'good layout, good internal arrangement, good equipment and good appearance.' Lack of design was held responsible for so much dreary and monotonous development in the past. Design was seen as 'the function of the architect' and the report strongly advocated that local authorities be required to employ the services of an architect (*Design of Dwellings* 1944: 10). Regarding design, Pleydell-Bouverie drew attention to the fact that 'few if any of the questionnaires' circulated by women's organisations at the time had questions about the exterior of the house. This she concluded, '...can only prompt one to suppose that, provided it is not "a hideous place," the woman is less concerned about the exterior design of a house than she is about the interior' (Pleydell-Bouverie 1944: 30), thus articulating the interior/exterior female/male ideology. The Dudley Report did not advocate any specific design style or aesthetic.

Although there were no direct questions on exterior design, Pleydell-Bouverie referred to voluntary suggestions made by respondents. In addition to being architect designed, she expressed the view that the exterior design should be 'free of embellishment'. This, however, does not imply a 'Modern Movement' aesthetic. The Urban District Association was quoted approvingly as saying, 'It is undesirable that the design of the houses should be standardised. The elevation should rely on simplicity of design and good proportion rather than embellishment.' Pleydell-Bouverie amplified this statement, 'Freedom from embellishment need not mean standardised and unimaginative exteriors, as a well balanced simplicity of structure can still be varied in any number of interesting designs which fit

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<sup>9</sup> Contrast with the kitchens of Margaret Shermean, 1951 and *Ideal Home* magazine, 1961 see pages 154 and 185.

happily into the surroundings' (Pleydell-Bouverie 1944: 30). As a statement, it is not that different from Walter Gropius when he asked in 1927, 'How can we build cheaper, better, more attractive houses?'

The assumption that industrialisation would make building forms more ugly is wrong. On the contrary standardisation of building elements will produce the fruitful result of creating new houses and towns bearing a common character.

Monotony as in the English suburban house is not to be feared as long as it is insisted that only the *parts* of buildings are standardised, that the *whole* building assembled from them remains variable. Standardisation of parts places no restrictions on the individual design (Gropius in Benton *et al* 1975: 196).

It is clear, both from Gropius' condemnation of the English suburban house and his contribution to the *Werkbund* estate in Stuttgart in the previous year, that Gropius had a very different view of the design that might result from using a flexible approach to standardisation than did Pleydell-Bouverie. At various points in her discussion she stated strongly that change would take place after the war and that new approaches to building methods would have to play an important part in what was produced, indeed she envisaged that the postwar period would eventually lead to a 'new twentieth century tradition' in which 'hand-craft will give way to the precision tool ...' (Pleydell-Bouverie 1944: 34). However, as the majority of the pictures she used to illustrate the text were essentially traditional style designs, the impression conveyed of external design ideals was basically traditional. Taking those illustrations which attract comments of approval, simplicity seems to have meant to Pleydell-Bouverie something more like the geometric proportions associated with Georgian architecture or 'Arts and Crafts' vernacular. Her concern is with functional improvements to benefit the housewife and family and help ease the tasks of living day by day. This wartime treatise of Pleydell-Bouverie specified characteristics of the ideal home that were to remain constant in the Exhibition in the years that followed - design values that eased the practical tasks of daily life combined with an exterior that was fundamentally traditional in form.

Pleydell-Bouverie's text was not written with the desire to produce a national blueprint, but as a response to the problems and poor housing conditions experienced by the women

she had encountered. She drew particular attention to the fact that over 34% of those who responded to the Women's Advisory Council questionnaire had no means of heating hot water except a kettle (Pleydell-Bouverie 1944: 71). She discussed the problems associated with the expense of heating giving some details of the costs involved, showing that these expenses are comparable to the cost of paying the rent. On average heating bills were found to be between six and nine shillings week, and rents were between five and fifteen shillings. She described how this could be a source of 'constant anxiety and strain' (Pleydell-Bouverie 1944: 66). In many places, particularly near coal mines, coal was the only source of heat for cooking because coal formed part of the miners payment. She expressed her concern about sanitation saying:

To emphasise that every dwelling must have its own W.C. may seem strange to those unfamiliar with conditions that still exist in some parts of the country - in urban as well as rural districts. In some of our industrial towns the only closet available to a group of houses is shared by several families and it is built in a back alley-way some distance from most of the houses, whilst in many rural areas the earth and pail closet still exist (Pleydell-Bouverie 1944: 62).

A further example of her concerns is provided by her discussion of windows. For her, it was not just a matter of reporting on technological developments, but of responding to a social need:

Of all these suggestions, however, none perhaps emphasises sufficiently strongly the great need there is for special improvements in windows for houses in the north country and midlands industrial areas. Those who have not actually lived for a year in the heart of these areas can possibly imagine the dreadful damage to health and home caused by smoke (Pleydell-Bouverie 1944: 78).

In addition to arguing for improvements in housing design and provision, she campaigned against social attitudes with which she disagreed:

To say that there are people who do not want bathrooms, and to insist that it is no use putting bathrooms in some houses for some people because it is only to supply another, and perhaps more convenient receptacle for coal is to be retrograde. Can one wonder that baths have been so used if the bathroom is near the back door, and there is no adequate supply of hot water? The small unscientific hot water tank, the total lack of main water supply, the unscientific methods of heating water so frequently installed in family houses have been the despair of housewives, and a parody of heating and plumbing, and there is little wonder that baths in such houses are utilised for purposes other than those for which they were originally intended (Pleydell-Bouverie 1944: 60).

She described how the evacuation resulting from the war had made people aware for the first time of the appalling conditions in which some people lived, and she described as excellent social documents *Working Class Wives* and *Our Towns*, saying:

They have told us of the need for good housing and how essential it is that the future mothers and fathers of our race should be given the chance to know what a real home means. Who can say what far-reaching effects on the serious social problems of to-day could not be accomplished with an adequate supply of spacious, soundly-built, well-designed and labour-saving houses? (Pleydell-Bouverie 1944: 130).

The former book was by Margery Spring-Rice, a doctor and then a director of the Kensington Trust, and was published in 1939. It was a study of 1200 working-class women and evidenced the poverty, poor diet and health, they suffered. *Our Towns* was published in 1943. It was a study prompted by children's health problems and poverty that had been revealed by the evacuation, conducted by the Women's Group on Public Welfare. The constant theme of promoting women's interests in relation to housing design, of encouraging women to adopt a proactive role, suggests that Pleydell-Bouverie should be seen as a feminist of her time. Her expressions of social concern in the book, suggest an alignment of view with the more left thinking groups. However, it seems unlikely that the *Daily Mail* would commission anyone with overtly left-wing views to write a book for them. As the organisation she helped to found after the war was concerned to promote private sector building, and as she was connected to the aristocracy by marriage, it is possible she may have been more right-wing in outlook. It is, therefore, not easy to be sure of her political stance and motivation. Whatever her party preferences may have been, Pleydell-Bouverie's writing associated design ideals for the home with a political agenda informed by perspectives of social concern and feminism. This resulted in a concern with function and quality of environment. Whether or not the people she claimed to be representing generally shared her campaigning views is not the issue here. What is important to this discussion is the way she described the difficulties that many experienced in their daily living conditions and the ideals of housing design and provision that many more harboured.

Although her writing is strongly coloured by her own particular viewpoint, Pleydell-Bouverie claimed to be representing the views of women throughout the country, and the question is therefore raised as to the nature and sources of her information. Ryan - who devotes a degree of space to Pleydell-Bouverie's book both in her thesis and in her own book, documenting the way Pleydell-Bouverie gave a voice to women's aspirations - says in her thesis:

...the *Daily Mail* presented it as a great act of philanthropy, saving the Government time and expense. The book combined the opinions of housing experts, women's organisations and 'ordinary' women. The survey of women's organisations made by the *Daily Mail* was an appropriate exercise for the new spirit of welfare-ism. In an era of reconstruction, social issues were back on the agenda (Ryan PhD thesis 1995: 224).

In her book she adds:

The Ideal Home exhibition was suspended from 1940-6 because of the Second World War but, in place of it, The Daily Mail commissioned Mrs Pleydell-Bouverie to make an extensive survey of the 'house that women want'. She travelled 90,000 miles around Britain over nearly three years and interviewed four and a half million women. ... She also drew on the research carried out by national women's organisations and their affiliated associations (Ryan 1997: 87).

Clearly it is suggested that Pleydell-Bouverie conducted a major survey on behalf of the *Daily Mail* as a substitute for the annual Exhibitions. The argument of this thesis is that the text should be seen in a somewhat different light, and one that more closely allies it to the evidence sought by the Dudley Committee. There are two basic issues that need to be examined to establish this view: the first is concerned with how extensive were Pleydell-Bouverie's researches; the second is concerned with the origins of the survey material on which much of her book was based.

It is clear that the time factor alone would not have allowed Pleydell-Bouverie to interview individually four and a half million women.<sup>10</sup> Indeed Pleydell-Bouverie did not herself claim to have interviewed that number. What she said in her book was that, 'the greater part of this important research was undertaken by recognised women's

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<sup>10</sup> This would have required an interview schedule of three and a half or four thousand interviews a day, depending on which time scale is adopted. (See next footnote.)



organisations' and 'it is estimated that these organisations represent some 4,500,000 women.' Furthermore, Pleydell-Bouverie goes on to say that 'only a small percentage' of these were actually respondents (Pleydell-Bouverie 1944: 15). Pleydell-Bouverie does say that oral evidence was taken 'in many representative areas' of the United Kingdom 'involving some 90,000 miles of travel over a period of nearly three years.'<sup>11</sup> The question is whether she was travelling this distance in order to obtain the oral evidence, or whether she travelled for some other purpose. When war broke out she stopped running the publicity company that she had founded and toured the country showing the controversial film *Having a Baby* combined with documentary films made by the Ministry of Health<sup>12</sup>. It seems likely that she combined travelling round the country showing information films and gathered information on housing conditions as she travelled - possibly from the women, and expectant mothers, who attended the film showings. It may even be that she initiated the idea for the book and then approached the *Daily Mail*.

The second question is concerned with the survey material she analysed. Far from being initiated by Pleydell-Bouverie or the *Daily Mail*, the probability is that it was initiated by the Government established Dudley Committee. The reason for this assertion is that, with one exception, all the organisations referred to by Pleydell-Bouverie appear in the list of those who gave evidence to the Dudley Committee.<sup>13</sup> Regarding this evidence Bullock

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<sup>11</sup> The biographical note at the front of the book says 'three and a half years', which is the figure that Ryan quotes.

<sup>12</sup> Obituary published in *The Times* 21 March 1981.

<sup>13</sup> The organisations listed as sources by Pleydell-Bouverie were:

The Electrical Association of Women  
 The National Council of Women  
 The National Federation of Women's Institutes  
 The National Union of Town's Women's Guilds  
 The Society of Women's Housing Managers  
 The Women's Advisory Housing Council  
 The Women's Gas Council  
 The Women' Group on Public Welfare  
 The Standing Joint Committee of Labour Women

All of these organisations are listed as having submitted evidence to the Dudley Committee except the last one. However, The Standing Joint Committee of Working Women's Organisations did, and it is possible that there was some connection between the two.

says that, 'The first task of the Dudley Committee was to collect evidence on the kind of housing that people wanted after the war and by the end of the summer the Committee had invited a wide number of different groups ... by mid-1942 at least eight surveys were being carried out by different women's organisations' (Bullock 1987: 76). Bullock names seven of these organisations in a footnote; six of which featured in the list of nine given by Pleydell-Bouverie. Furthermore, she referred, in the quotation given above,<sup>14</sup> to privately circulated reports which indicated *women's* expectations of postwar housing. The likelihood, therefore, is that Pleydell-Bouverie was drawing on reports conducted by these organisations at the behest of the Dudley Committee. Far from 'saving the Government time and money', Pleydell-Bouverie quite possibly used material that had been initiated on behalf of the Government.

If this view is correct, that Pleydell-Bouverie combined evidence the same or similar to that received by the Dudley Committee with the views she herself had gained travelling the country, the point of interest becomes the relationship between the ideals expressed by Pleydell-Bouverie's book and the recommendations of the Dudley Report (some of which have already been discussed).

The Dudley Committee was appointed by the Minister of Health on 20 March 1942, with the following terms of reference: 'To make recommendations as to the design, planning, layout, standards of construction and equipment of dwellings for the people throughout the country' (*Design of Dwellings* 1944: 8). The Dudley Committee's report was not published until 1944: the same year as Pleydell-Bouverie's book. She appeared to make a reference to the Dudley Committee when she said, 'The Ministry of Health in 1942 appointed a special committee to study and co-ordinate reports on housing questions received from women's organisations all over the country ...' (Pleydell-Bouverie 1944:

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<sup>14</sup> Page 36

118). She then went on to say that their recommendations would 'no doubt be incorporated in a report' which indicates both that she was aware of the existence of the Committee, and that her work was the first to be published that year. But her writing gives the impression that she did not place great hope in the outcome of their work when she said:

Such suggestions, it is to be hoped, will in due course appear in the regulations and model bye-laws. It is, nevertheless, almost certain that many Local Authorities will be content to accept the minimum specifications as the maximum. The temptation to build down to price instead of up to standard will again be great. There is a danger that the post-war subsidised house will be merely a slight up-grading of the pre-war house of the same class (Pleydell-Bouverie 1944: 118).

Though Pleydell-Bouverie may have knowingly used some of the same survey material as the Dudley Committee, the quotations above show that she did not anticipate her work to be particularly similar. Indeed the whole campaigning tone of much of her writing suggests that she was calling for change rather than trying to pre-empt the Committee for the benefit of the Exhibition.

The Dudley Report lists those who gave evidence to the Committee, but it does not describe the evidence in any way. If the contention here that the evidence of the women's organisations in the two documents is to a large degree common, it would appear that surveys conducted by the different women's organisations were independent and took different forms, for Pleydell-Bouverie said, 'The questions asked did not always take the same form, nor did all the questionnaires deal with precisely the same subjects in relation to housing. But each report produced from evidence represents the considered views of several thousand women' (Pleydell-Bouverie 1944: 16). She gave no methodological discussion beyond this statement, and the details of the facts or figures were not given apart from the occasional statistic referred to in the main text, neither does she describe the oral evidence she collected. However, in the first chapter of the book she outlined the different social backgrounds of the women whose views she canvassed, and said, 'The views expressed, therefore, are the consensus of opinion of women who live in all parts of

the country, and in all descriptions of circumstance and district' (Pleydell-Bouverie 1944: 16).

One of the main differences between the Dudley Report and the views expressed by Pleydell-Bouverie concerned their attitude towards flats. As has already been stated, Pleydell-Bouverie described the overwhelming desire for houses as opposed to flats. This must have been expressed in some form in the evidence from the women's organisations received by the Dudley Committee. Furthermore, Elizabeth Denby is listed amongst the individuals who gave evidence to the Dudley Committee, and although Denby collaborated successfully with Maxwell Fry on the flats of Sassoon House and Kensal House, she campaigned strongly against flats and in favour small family houses with gardens at a density of 40 to the acre in high density central urban areas. The reason why the Dudley Committee came to a different conclusion to the widely held preference for houses is discussed in detail by Bullock (1987). He shows the issue to be closely related to the problems of achieving a sufficiently high population density to meet the needs of urban reconstruction. Their report discussed quite detailed and specific density targets for a number of different types of location, from city centres through the inner and outer rings to areas of open development. They envisaged the development of neighbourhood communities with an ideal population of about 10,000 people. They argued that at even the very highest density level they would allow of 120 persons per acre (their norm being no more than 100 persons) seventy to seventy-five per cent of the populations could be accommodated in houses, but that these should be constructed at a density of twenty dwellings per acre (*Design of Dwellings* 1944: 60). Without proper planning they argued that already congested areas would be developed at too high a density leading to blocks of flats being accepted as normal. Higher densities should be developed in places where they would be adjacent to open spaces. In order to achieve a proper balance they urged that redevelopment plans should be developed over areas big enough to achieve an appropriate balance of dwellings and avoid piecemeal construction (*Design of Dwellings* 1944: 56). Bullock (1987: 82) shows that behind the deliberations of the Dudley Committee the

question of density was a very real issue, and that it was related to such plans as those of Abercrombie and Forshaw for the redevelopment of London. These required a density of 200 persons per acre; and any development of over 100 persons per acre demanded the building of flats to accommodate the numbers.

The Dudley Committee was aware of the strong feelings against flats and attributed the desire for a garden as one of the reasons: 'Our evidence shows that flats are unpopular with large sections of the community, particularly families with children. It also suggests that the principal reasons for this unpopularity are noise; lack of privacy; the absence of a private garden; the difficulties of supervising children at play; and the necessary rule against keeping pets' (*Design of Dwellings* 1944: 12). In contrast Pleydell-Bouverie argued for the ideals to which people aspired. Although she made detailed and well researched suggestions at the level of the design of the individual house, she did not have to confront the problems of providing for a mass population in desperate need of accommodation.

The Dudley Committee recognised the validity of the objections against flats made by families with children but, because of the requirement to cater also for smaller households, such as those Pleydell-Bouverie listed, they considered flats were 'less objectionable for other persons.' They stated that, 'There is a need therefore for a mixed development of family houses mingled with blocks of flats for smaller households, as suggested in the report on site planning and layout in relation to housing' (*Design of Dwellings* 1944: 12). It would appear that the decision of the Dudley Committee not to rule out flats, despite the evidence of popular opinion was of significant importance for the vast numbers of flats that were eventually built after the war, even though these developments ignored the difficulties that had been recognised for families with children. Pleydell-Bouverie was able to ignore these wider planning issues and therefore presented people's aspirations and ideals rather than a practical solution that related to the problems when viewed from a national perspective. It may well be that many people's hopes were framed without

reference to these wider realities. However, the views expressed in Pleydell-Bouverie's book suggest that many who attended the *Ideal Home Exhibitions* in the years that followed the war, were relocated in flats despite the fact that they would have preferred to have houses with gardens. The Exhibition would therefore have represented their hopes and desires.<sup>15</sup>

With regard to the internal layout proposed for dwellings, both the Dudley Report and Pleydell-Bouverie gave considerable thought to the domestic areas concerned with cooking and eating. The Dudley Report also appears to give evidence of shifts recent to the time in the use of space allocated to cooking and the consumption of food. The Report's discussion was based on what they described as the 'commonest type of interwar local authority house'. It stated that, 'When the original type of Council house was evolved, cooking on a coal range was almost universal', and 'The range was frequently the only source of heat in the house, and was therefore commonly placed in the living-room and, at first, all meals were cooked and eaten in that room' (*Design of Dwellings* 1944: 13). With the increased availability of gas and electricity the cooker was introduced - normally being placed in the scullery, with most of the cooking undertaken there instead of in the living-room. As a consequence, meals tended to be taken in the scullery, and items like the dresser were placed there as well. The scullery was therefore seen by the Committee as far too small. Looking at the use of the living-room the Committee said:

We find to-day a growing desire to use it for the social and recreational side of family life undisturbed by constant interruption for meals, and this tendency, coupled with the greater convenience of eating in the same room in which food is cooked, has no doubt led to the custom of taking most meals in the scullery, despite its unsuitability for this purpose (*Design of Dwellings* 1944: 13).

In addition to the original desire to separate the dirtier domestic tasks from cooking as described in the Tudor Walters report, the Dudley Report suggested that another reason

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<sup>15</sup> The size of the annual attendances, the proportion of people attending living in the home counties, and the number of people living in flats in the London area makes this conclusion probable.

might have been the number of meals that were required to be prepared and consumed.

The Dudley Committee gave a timetable of the meals of an 'average' working household:

7 am	Breakfast for husband
8 am	Breakfast for children
12.30 pm	Lunch for children
4.30 pm	Tea for children
6 pm	Tea for husband
7-8 pm	Supper for children
9 pm	Supper for husband <sup>16</sup>

They commented that they did not think that it was generally appreciated 'how frequently separate meals have to be prepared for a working family, where meal times depend on hours of work and school and where on week days it rarely happens that the whole family can sit down to table at the same time' (*Design of Dwellings* 1944: 13). These observations in the Dudley Report about the patterns of space used for food preparation and consumption and the shifts that were taking place, together with the views of women described by Pleydell-Bouverie, illuminate the different plan layouts concerned with the various cooking and eating arrangements exhibited in the postwar homes as shown in the Exhibition.<sup>17</sup>

Essentially many of the ideals expressed in both documents were concerned with standards of space and equipment in the home. Both the Dudley Report and Pleydell-Bouverie's writing give indications that their recommendations were not just about improving poor conditions. Both give the impression of changes that had or were taking place in the use and consumption of domestic space, particularly in relation to cooking, laundering, study, and recreation. Various determinants were referred to, for example the

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<sup>16</sup>One thing that is noticeable about the meal time-table is the complete absence of any reference to when the housewife eats. The gender roles articulated by the report are quite specific, for example: 'the housewife who does the cooking'; 'Sufficient attention has not yet been given to the question of how small children can be properly supervised while their mothers are using the communal laundry'; '...corners and waste spaces, which are difficult to clean and are a source of unnecessary labour to the housewife ...' (Dudley Committee, 1944: 14, 22, 30). These quotations show that whatever practical wartime emancipation women had achieved, the ideology of their role in relation to the home was still firmly in place.

<sup>17</sup> See for example pages 145, 180, 184, 257.

increased availability of the service provisions of gas and electricity, and changing cooking methods. The Dudley Report mentioned in addition, the development of education changing children's study needs, and the wartime experiences of working in factories or living in hostels has already been referred to.

There was an irony that one of the consequences of the war was the temporary closure of the *Ideal Home Exhibition* at the very time when the destruction of the war had caused issues about housing to be on the popular and national agenda as never before. The Exhibition Department of the *Ideal Home Exhibition's* contribution to the public debate was Pleydell-Bouverie's book the *Daily Mail Book of Post-War Homes*. It was a feminist text that claimed to be 'based on the ideas and opinions of the women of Britain' and it argued for housing standards that would improve the lot of women and ease the domestic burden. The book was probably based on some of the same evidence as was received by the Dudley Committee for its report. Many of the recommendations are similar, though Pleydell-Bouverie's tend to be more generous. The ideal of the time was of decent space standards and adequate service provision and appointments. However, they do differ in some important respects. The difference between the two was partly one of contingency, but the difference was also a space that allowed for the creation of desire. The Dudley Committee was constrained to take into account the realities involved in the reconstruction building programme, and plans such as those of Abercrombie and Forshaw. This, it was considered, necessitated the building of flats to achieve the required population densities. Flats were not what women wanted, according to Pleydell-Bouverie, almost without exception their ideal home was a house with a garden in a non-urban setting. Lying behind these ideals were issues of privacy and individualism. The plans for postwar reconstruction involved building and planning for communities: according to Pleydell-Bouverie the enforced communal living imposed by the war was something that the majority wished to leave behind. Certainly what many wished to leave behind were the appalling housing conditions with which many had had to cope before the war. Both the Dudley Report and Pleydell-Bouverie's book were expressions of the widespread desire



for change and improvement. It was inevitable that the war would bring about major changes, but it may have accelerated some changes that were already on the way. There are indications in both documents of changing patterns in the consumption of domestic space. The Dudley Committee considered that experience of working in factories and elsewhere had not only familiarised women with various equipment, it had also raised expectations. When the *Ideal Home Exhibition* was able to reopen after the war, it was to speak to many of these ideals and desires that had been generated during the war in the Exhibition's absence.

## CHAPTER TWO

### The Immediate Postwar Exhibition Context

The previous chapter set out to consider aspirations that developed in the Second World War that constructed concepts of housing 'ideals' and thus created referents for one of the terms of the Exhibition's title. The objective of this chapter is concerned with the term 'exhibition' with the aim of contextualising the *Ideal Home Exhibition* through a discussion of those other exhibitions which constitute the early postwar exhibition context namely, *Britain can Make It* held in 1946, and *The Festival of Britain* held in 1951. Both of these may be described as official in that they resulted from government initiatives; and both involved the newly formed Council of Industrial Design (CoID). A comparison with these exhibitions and the way they were determined reveals how the design ideals articulated in the different exhibitions were located in different economic concerns, political stances, and organising power structures. The intention is to explore this to show how these values may be deduced from the representations of the *Ideal Home Exhibition*.

Charles W.V. Truefitt, the Organiser of the *Ideal Home Exhibition*, sought to appropriate the tradition of the Great Exhibition of 1851, when he wrote in the *Daily Mail* on the eve of the 1951 Exhibition:

This year is Festival Year and the centenary of the Great Exhibition of Queen Victoria's heyday, when Britain built a palace of glass in Hyde Park for all the world to see.

So this year a replica of that Crystal Palace has been built at one end of the Grand Hall of Olympia. A long broadly carpeted highway lit by massive chandeliers and draped overhead with regal-coloured fabrics leads up to it. And within the little palace itself is a luxurious display of British silks, rayons, and decorative glass - the whole offering you an atmosphere of Victorian luxury in a mid-20th century exhibition (*Daily Mail* 5 March 1951: 2).

In this passage, not only did Truefitt place the *Ideal Home Exhibition* in the historical context of the Great Exhibition, he additionally set it in the context of the coming *Festival of Britain* that was to open later in the year. Truefitt's obvious aim was to use the Great Exhibition as a signifier whose values could be transferred through the shared notion of

'exhibition' onto the *Ideal Home Exhibition*. In the same way he attempted to appropriate the forthcoming contemporary festivity onto what was signified by the *Ideal Home Exhibition*. The emphasis of his text was on display; signified not only by words like 'regal', 'luxury', and 'Queen Victoria's heyday', but also by the connotations of 'massive chandeliers and the 'long broadly carpeted highway''. Given that the shortages that the war caused did not cease with the coming of peace, these images of 'Victorian luxury' would have been particularly telling in the period that followed the Second World War. Indeed some shortages intensified after the war was over. The privations of life in the postwar period could be articulated as a kind of 'other' with which a 'luxurious' 'heyday' could be contrasted and which thus provided a space for the unspoken politics of the Exhibition. Second, by speaking of 'Victorian luxury', Truefitt proclaimed a design ideology significantly different from the modernism described as 'good design' mediated by the design establishment<sup>1</sup> in the two officially sponsored CoID exhibitions of the immediate postwar period. Furthermore, signifiers of grandeur, class, and tradition were, as will be discussed later, important aspects of the *Ideal Home Exhibition's* representations<sup>2</sup>. For whether modernism was ever really egalitarian, as some of its more avant-garde proponents might have wished, may be open to debate, the important point is that the *Ideal Home Exhibition* was not.

Although Truefitt attempted to appropriate the tradition of the Great Exhibition, the *Ideal Home Exhibition* had by that time more than achieved a tradition of its own. Thus the 1958 Catalogue writer was able to eulogise the interwar Exhibitions in the following words:

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<sup>1</sup> Regarding the use of the term 'establishment' Reyner Banham comments: '...it is difficult to find a better collective noun for all those salaried spokespersons of the Council of Industrial Design, the editorial "We" of the *Architectural Review*, and other former officers and gentlemen...' (Banham, R. in Banham and Hillier 1976: 190).

<sup>2</sup> See page 242.

Throughout those years the brilliant and imaginative décor of the Grand Hall never ceased to inspire admiration. Each year it had seemed impossible that the next Daily Mail Ideal Home Exhibition could surpass its predecessors. Again and again the limits of ingenuity appeared to have been reached, with every possible idea worked out to the full, every conceivable novelty brought under contribution, so that subsequent Exhibitions could be no more than repetitions of their forerunners.

Yet those regular frequenters of the Exhibition - and a considerable percentage of visitors are yearly visitors - who come from all over the country, never fail, each time they pass through the great doors of Olympia to draw a quick breath of astonishment (Exhibition Catalogue 1958: 56).

As a consequence, when the Exhibition reopened after the war in 1947 its own established traditions and successful formula provided the pattern for the postwar Exhibitions. The aim had been to provide 'brilliant and imaginative décor' that would elicit a 'quick breath of astonishment'. In the first instance the emphasis was on the Exhibition as a show rather than on its contents. This was, as this chapter will attempt to show, an approach significantly different from the exhibitions of the CoID. Despite the fact that the Exhibition reopened in the immensely straightened circumstances of the immediate postwar, fundamentally the Exhibitions sought to return to the pre-war model of spectacle.

Lord Rothermere, the proprietor of the *Daily Mail*, contributed a special lead article for the first postwar Exhibition in place of the one normally provided by the editor, in which he said:

...our everyday world, put out of joint by total war, is still hobbling along, so to speak on crutches.

The prime purpose of this first post-war *DAILY MAIL* Ideal Home Exhibition is to accelerate the pace of its recovery and the re-establishment of that vital part of the nation's life which is its family-life (Exhibition Catalogue 1947: 3).

This statement with its reference to 'family-life' represents the Exhibition as having a much broader concern for the home than either of the two design focused state sponsored exhibitions. For, although the Exhibition was fundamentally concerned with the materiality of the home, the *Ideal Home Exhibition* promoted itself as in the first place concerned with home and family rather than design. Consistent with this, even though the Catalogue allies itself with issues of postwar reconstruction in its language of 'beginning again', is the Catalogue's description of the show's exhibits of 'craftsmanship and production' as

ministering to 'our comfort and enjoyment at home' (Exhibition Catalogue 1947: 7). It was the home as a place of consumer choice, rather than evangelising a specific design aesthetic that constituted the central focus of the *Ideal Home Exhibition*.

If one of the determinants of the postwar *Ideal Home Exhibitions* was its own tradition, this was not the case with *Britain Can Make It* and the *Festival of Britain*. For there had not been a national exhibition devoted exclusively to industrial design since the much criticised Burlington House Exhibition of 1935<sup>3</sup>. However, much more important in determining the nature of both the *Britain Can Make It* and the Festival were, in varying degrees for each exhibition, government anxieties and decisions concerned with issues such as: reconstruction; trade and the balance of payments; and government policies and political objectives.

Maguire says that the weaknesses of British industry were made apparent to the Government in the early years of the war. Equally apparent was the nation's growing dependence on America which was '... starkly demonstrated to those in office, even if it was largely hidden behind a veil of patriotic and imperial propaganda from a public sustained by belief in British virtues and British doggedness dependent, largely, on an officially endorsed construction of history ...' (Maguire in Maguire and Woodham 1997: 30). Many of the problems were structural, ranging from an absence of managerial skills to a lack of standardisation. They were as equally exemplified in new industries such as the motor industry as in old ones. So the 'blame could not be laid at the door' of problems created by an early industrial revolution. After the war exports were going to be vital to the national economy, and British industry was clearly going to have to change if it was to meet this need. There was, as a 1945 cabinet briefing paper quoted by Maguire showed, nothing to suggest that industry would 'of its own freewill' so change (Maguire

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<sup>3</sup> The Burlington House exhibition by the Royal Academy of British Art in Industry was criticised for the exhibits being too expensive, too little was mass produced, and too much was 'modish and eccentric and too little of sound plain workaday character' (Farr 1955: 234).

in Maguire and Woodham 1997: 33). Indeed, the need for such change was not immediately obvious to industrialists. Immediately after the war scarcity created demand at home, Germany and Japan were seen as defeated, and the threat from America was less apparent, hidden both by the 'trans-national structure of American corporate capitalism' and 'grandiose rhetoric and official secrecy' (Maguire in Maguire and Woodham 1997:10 & 9). In addition to the economic concerns about the state of British industry, there were political considerations. Even where nationalisation was not the mechanism of regulation, the postwar Labour Government was committed to a strategy of planning, of which the control of industry, by one means or another, was an important part. Although the CoID had its own agenda in terms of design aesthetics, it was fundamentally a government created quango set up to meet these underlying political and economic objectives.

Unlike the *Ideal Home Exhibition*, that looked back and attempted to re-establish its own successful commercial tradition within the new postwar economic realities, the CoID led exhibitions grew out of a combination of national, political, and economic concerns, linked to the desire of the design establishment to promote a specific design ideology. One of the most important developments of major determining significance for the design ideology of both *Britain Can Make It* and the *Festival of Britain* was therefore the formation of the CoID. The Council was established late in 1944 and, according to Farr, was the very first such organisation anywhere in the world (Farr 1955: 208). The CoID was set up by Hugh Dalton, President of the Board of Trade of the wartime Coalition Government. This decision had its origins in first, an interdepartmental report submitted to the Presidents of the Boards of Trade and Education; second, the Meynell-Hoskins Report on art and training of 1944; and third, recommendations of a sub-committee chaired by Sir Cecil Weir for the Department of Overseas Trade in 1943 (unpublished). Farr says that the CoID's terms of reference followed the Weir Report's recommendation which he quotes as being '... to promote by all practical means the improvement of design in the products of British Industry.' Its main tasks were: to hold exhibitions, to promote good design in industry, to provide education authorities with advice on design education, to

advise government departments, to establish design centres, to be a centre for design information, and to educate the public on good design.

As a consequence of the CoID's terms of reference the aims of the *Britain Can Make It* exhibition, and the *Festival of Britain* differed greatly from the objectives of the promoters of the *Ideal Home Exhibition*. In the latter case, as the management of a national daily newspaper, they constituted the board of directors of an exhibition whose basic aims were to promote the show as a commercial exhibition and, by association - as the *Daily Mail Exhibition* - to promote the sale of the newspaper whose product it was. The main aim therefore was to promote a successful exhibition for its own sake, and that of the newspaper, rather than an exhibition that was successful in promoting or communicating specific understandings in relation to products and their design. At the most fundamental level the products were used by the *Ideal Home Exhibition* to create the Exhibition: the CoID intended the exhibitions to act as an influence on the creation - i.e. design - of the products. When the CoID exhibitions are compared with the *Ideal Home Exhibition*, what is revealed is that the sets of economic relations and consequent considerations that constitute the underlying basis for the superstructure of ideas promoted by the different exhibitions were quite different.

The primary objective of the CoID stemmed from the Government's desire to improve the design of British goods because of their concern about the standard of design of British products and the effect of this on economic competitiveness. Whatever industrialists may have thought, Woodham (1983) says that many in the design field had appreciated that there would be a need to reorganise British industry in order for it to be competitive after the war. A survey that investigated design factors affecting exports carried out by W Crawford and Partners was published in *Art and Industry* in 1945. The survey had found that whereas British products were considered to have good quality of manufacture, they were also considered inferior to those from the U.S.A., Germany, and Sweden in terms of modernity and the appearance of their design. The U.S.A. again led in terms of packaging, spares and service (*Art and Industry* November 1945 : 156 quoted in

Woodham 1983 : 65). Carrington says that as soon as the new Labour Government was in power, Sir Stafford Cripps, who had succeeded Dalton at the Board of Trade, saw in the CoID ‘... a useful policy instrument for a dramatic move in a policy of hopeful reconstruction.’ Cripps, he says, shared Dalton’s personal interest in design and gave instructions to the new Council to stage an exhibition to show all the good things which were shortly to be available. The designer of *Britain Can Make It*, James Gardner, said Cripps was determined to use the exhibition to encourage manufacturers to produce well produced designs for overseas sales (Velarde and Gardner in Sparke 1986a: 11). Stewart notes that although the Government’s objectives in promoting the exhibition placed an emphasis on production issues, while the concern of the CoID was with design, as these aims enhanced each other they were wholly compatible (Stewart 1987: 77).

*Britain Can Make It* was the first exhibition put on by the CoID. The fact that it was held so soon after the war with relatively few staff available was due to the ‘driving enthusiasm’ of Cripps (Farr 1955: 236). The aims of the exhibition were clear:

To intensify the interest of manufacturers and distributors in industrial design and their awareness of the desirability of rapid progress; to arouse greater interest in design in the minds of the general public, as consumers; and to stage a prestige advertisement before the world for British industry, industrial design, and standards of display (*Council of Industrial Design* 1947: 4).

The reference to the ‘general public, as consumers’ shows that one of the aims was the education of the public in their patterns of consumption. Not only because it was assumed that they would benefit by purchasing better designed goods, but that public demand for ‘good design’ would put pressure on manufacturers to produce better designed items, and so make them more attractive as exports. To achieve these aims, goods were carefully selected for display in the exhibition. British manufactures were asked to submit their best designs, and in total 15,836 were submitted by some 3,385 firms. Separate committees for each industry undertook the selection of the exhibits and they chose 5,259 from 1,297 firms for display.



This process of selecting exhibits aroused suspicion among manufacturers, particularly among those in the Midlands. They held that the selection process was in the hands of a metropolitan clique who had no right to tell manufacturers what should or should not be made. Some of them argued that they were afforded no opportunity to discuss the choice of the selectors. A choice that appeared to them to be arbitrary and that ‘... could only result in a manufacturer’s refusal to co-operate or his unthinking acceptance of the standard set. It was also said that the selectors’ taste was unallied to the known demand in some foreign markets ...’ (Farr 1955: 236). Farr further suggests that the ‘feelings of suspicion and distrust’ which characterised the manufacturers’ response was a legacy of the Burlington House Exhibition.

Owing to the postwar shortages, an even more serious problem for *Britain Can Make It* was that goods were not available. To industrialists who saw themselves as ‘level-headed businessmen’, ‘... the very notion of an exhibition of things which for the most part were not available, or which even if in production were only for export seemed well-nigh ludicrous ...’ (Carrington 1976: 172). In the event, three categories of availability were given to the items displayed: ‘Available’, ‘Available Soon’ (by 1st January 1947), and ‘Available Later’ (after 1st January 1947). The title of the exhibition came from the war-time slogan of the Blitz ‘Britain can take it’. The fact that goods were not available for purchase led to jibes such as ‘Britain Can’t Have It’.

This scarcity of goods available for purchase also had implications for the manufacturers’ response to the design ideology of CoID. It was a sellers’ market and manufacturers did not need the added competitive edge of ‘good design’ because they had little difficulty in finding buyers for their products.

The difference between the commercial *Ideal Home Exhibition* and the non-commercial nature of the CoID exhibitions is evident in Truefitt’s *Daily Mail* article launching the 1948 *Ideal Home Exhibition*. He wrote that in planning the Exhibition, priority was to be given to ‘... manufacturers who had good new and efficient products READY FOR PEOPLE

TO BUY' (original emphasis) (*Daily Mail* 3 March 1948: 2). There can be little doubt that this had its origins in the response to the availability problems experienced by *Britain Can Make It*. It is possible that there was an additional target for these words, namely the Labour Government. Maguire says that 'sectors of the press hostile to the government' used the problem of the shortages at the exhibition 'to attack its economic competence' (Maguire and Woodham 1997: 39). Not only was the *Daily Mail* able to portray its own exhibition in a much more favourable light when compared to *Britain Can Make It*, it could also imply a failure of competence on the part of the Government that was behind the 'official' exhibition.

Such criticism ignored the fact that 'good design' was the criterion for choosing items for display, other items could no doubt have been found if their design had been considered adequate. The criterion of 'good design' was not an issue for the *Ideal Home Exhibition*. As with the manufacturers, 'it was a sellers market' and the Exhibition was in the business of providing the market.

The purpose of the *Festival of Britain* - originally proposed in the *News Chronicle* by its editor, Gerald Berry, as an international exhibition to commemorate the Great Exhibition - was less clear than that of *Britain Can Make It*. Indeed Forty says that '... the question of what the festival was celebrating came up from time to time, and yet the answer was not as obvious as Morrison made it seem' (Forty in Banham and Hillier (eds.) 1976: 33). Though the initial proposal had been for an international exhibition, the Labour Government found itself in increasing financial difficulty in the postwar economic situation and the Festival was recast as a British one. The official aims became to illustrate the British contribution to civilisation since 1851, in the arts, science, industrial design and technology. However, Forty argues that in many ways the festival was a celebration of the work of the reforming Labour Government.

If the justification of the Festival was somewhat unclear, the process by which exhibits were selected was highly organised. The CoID was represented on the Festival

Presentation Panel. It was responsible for all the industrial products and some of the craft items to be exhibited. It was aided in the selection process by the Federation of British Industries Industrial Art Committee set up in 1921. Work began in 1947. In 1948 an industrial survey was conducted to find the most interesting design developments. This was the first of four stages in the selection process. At the second stage, what became known as the 'Stock List' was set up. This was to aid a series of discussion groups that had been established for each industry. Manufacturers were asked to supply descriptions and photographs of their best products; these were made into a card index of approved designs. The 'Stock List' grew from about 1,400 photographs in 1949 to over 20,000 by the time of the Festival. This represented the work of some 5,000 firms. All the items considered had to be in production, designed, and produced in Great Britain. The first of these criteria represents, perhaps, something of a response to the criticisms levelled at *Britain Can Make It*. (After the Festival some sections of the 'Stock List' were maintained as a free resource for buyers, writers and lecturers and it was re-titled the 'Design Review'). The third step was that industry appointed 238 panel members to approve of items - rejecting them on the basis of faulty manufacture or functional inefficiency. The fourth stage was that a group of the convenors and designers employed by the Festival, chaired by Hartland-Thomas, made the final selection.<sup>4</sup>

The result of this process of selection was that only one example of each item selected was exhibited in the Festival. Consequently a large number of items were chosen in order to fill the exhibition. Critics have suggested that this directly contributed to a reduction in the design standard of exhibits. They argued that because so many items had to be chosen from the 'Stock List' standards had to be lowered. Gordon Russell, director of the CoID, stated that the aim had been to find something of worth in as many firms as possible. He argued that a festival that was publicly funded could not possibly put on a national display

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<sup>4</sup> The Festival was not a trade fair and items were not for sale, however, visitors were able to obtain manufacturers' names and addresses. Manufacturers were not charged for displaying their product, but they were required to loan the item free of charge and to arrange for its transportation.

that drew on the products of no more than a handful of firms. He had also stated from the beginning that the Festival must exhibit 'real things for real people'. This approach is rejected by commentators such as Farr and Pevsner<sup>5</sup>. Commenting that the overall standard of groups like jewellery, silver, and pottery, was far below that set by furniture, textiles and glass; Farr is strongly critical of the choice of exhibits, and implied that the CoID failed in its responsibilities:

Would not the exclusion of such articles be tolerated when the alternative meant that the general design standard would be lowered? After all the Council is supported by public funds to improve 'by all practicable means' the standard of industrial design. This cannot be achieved if the Council gives official sanction to designs that do not meet with its whole-hearted approval. If it had rejected such articles manufacturers - even whole industries - might have thought again about design and employed better designers. The distinction of having a design exhibited in the Festival exhibitions was a legitimate incentive for manufacturers which could have been exploited more (Farr 1955: 239).

This debate highlights the distinction between the CoID and the *Ideal Home Exhibition*. Design ideals were the consciously and specifically articulated values espoused by the official exhibitions associated with the CoID. The process of selection was precisely to further design ideals. With the *Ideal Home Exhibition* such ideals were not part of the process by which it was constructed. In an internal report, discussed below<sup>6</sup>, Cecil Lewis drew attention to the fact that the Exhibition was made up of, what he described as, two separate exhibitions: the show provided by organisers, and items displayed by the exhibitors. Lewis suggested an analogy with a 'frame' and a 'picture'. The show organisers were responsible for the 'frame', namely the Exhibition decorations and the 'entertainment' features that helped to attract the public. The 'picture' was the actual products displayed in the Exhibition provided by the exhibitors. It is clear from the Report that the commercial issues that governed the production of the Exhibition were major

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<sup>5</sup> They co-authored a critical review of the Festival of Britain in the *Architectural Review* December 1951. Farr's book *Design in British Industry* was an update of Pevsner's *Enquiry into Industrial Art in England 1937*.

<sup>6</sup> Chapter 3.

determinants regarding the exhibits. Far from being able to play a censoring role like that advocated by Farr for the CoID, it is clear that the organisers of the *Ideal Home Exhibition* were beholden to their exhibitors and under financial pressure to fill the display areas. Lewis commented on the consequences of not being in a position to insist on having only the best firms as exhibitors, ‘... what the exhibition has lost, in losing, for instance, the top furnishing and decorating houses, is their taste and style’ and ‘we accept many today we know to be second rate opportunists ...’ (Lewis nd: 44). Lewis also wrote, ‘We cannot permit the cabin boy to steer the Queen Mary - that is we cannot permit one exhibitor, because he has always been in a certain place to insist on it, and threaten to withdraw if he does not get it (Lewis nd: 39).

This shows that the process of selection of exhibits for the exhibitions associated with the CoID when compared with the way items came to be shown at the *Ideal Home Exhibition* was quite different. The CoID was within limits able to structure a process by which exhibits were displayed that were in accordance with its design ideals, even though in actual fact the CoID was not able to give whole-hearted support to all of them. The Council was able to ask that manufacturers submit their best designs for approval. This was not a situation enjoyed by the *Ideal Home Exhibition*. The commercial nature of the show meant that they were not themselves filling exhibition display cases; but were allocating empty stand space. It was up to the individual exhibitor which of their products they chose to display and how they went about it. The only control over design available to the *Ideal Home Exhibition* organisers was with the major display attractions of the Exhibition itself. If the *Festival of Britain* was criticised by those like Farr quoted above because its need to find items for display led to a lowering of standards, how much more would this have applied to the *Ideal Home Exhibition*, where no criteria existed and where manufacturers were free to make their own choice?

Each of the exhibitions addressed the viewing public with a number of messages, some explicit some implicit. *Britain Can Make it* ‘... was the first Government-sponsored exhibition in which particular stress was laid on design ...’ (Farr 1955: 216). Penny

Sparke describes it as the CoID's 'first piece of major design propaganda' saying, '... it reflected a world which succeeded the grey austerity of wartime design.' She continues her discussion of the address of the exhibition by stating, 'The exhibition had a number of messages for the visitors... that Britain had got back on its feet very rapidly after the devastation of war; that it had produced a whole new range of exciting designs, from furniture to fashion to garden equipment; and that industrial design was here to stay ...'(Sparke 1986b: 65). Regarding the *Festival of Britain*, Conekin argues that the Festival's advocacy of modernism was part of its presentation of the country's future. The functionalism of modernism was part of a continuum with planning, and the benefits of scientific advance. The new Britain would be one where all democratically enjoyed these advances. Ultimately this was an expression of the Labour Party's aspirations and ideals. Certainly the Festival was politicised from early on and, as Adrian Forty describes, it was strongly attacked by Conservatives like Churchill, bitter at defeat in the General Election of 1945, an attack partly carried out through the *Daily Mail's* rivals the *Daily Express* and the *Evening Standard* of the Beaverbrook press (Forty in Banham and Hillier (eds.) 1976: 29).

One outcome of *Britain Can Make It* and the *Festival of Britain* was the clear promotion of the role and status of the designer, not to mention the promotion of the word 'designer' instead of 'industrial' or 'commercial artist'. Not only was this done through the publicity given to the concept of 'good design', in the case of *Britain Can Make It* sections of the exhibition explicitly advocated the role of the designer. In the exhibition each exhibit was credited both to the maker and the designer. In this way designers were promoted as named figures whose work was to be seen as a contribution made from within a field of professional expertise, instead of their being viewed as anonymous artists working in the employ of manufacturers. Carrington commented, 'Apart from the lift it gave to national morale, it had two important effects. It established once and for all the status of industrial designer in modern civilisation; and it gave the Design Council a professional pride and confidence in its future (Carrington 1976: 173). This approach to the role and status of the designer stands again in marked contrast to the *Ideal Home*

*Exhibition* where designers, unlike architects, were hardly mentioned as named professionals. It was not until 1966 when the Exhibition instituted its 'Blue Ribbon Awards' for items in the Exhibition deemed of a prize winning design standard, that it began clearly to recognise design as an issue in its own right.

Along with the promotion of the role and status of the designer, both the CoID exhibitions advocated the specific design ideology of 'modernism' with its mass production aesthetic<sup>7</sup>. 'Modernism' was not then seen as a style, it was rather the case that such items, albeit with a 'contemporary style' aesthetic, were seen as examples of 'good design' as against 'bad' design, with notions of 'form and function' used as the criteria of distinction. Reyner Banham quotes John Murray as making exactly this point. He denied that there was a specific 'Festival Style' by saying there was merely good design (Banham, R. in Banham and Hillier (eds.) 1976: 195). The *Britain Can Make It* exhibition guide book gave suggestions about how to judge the exhibits by referring to the concepts of 'Efficiency', 'Appearance' and use of 'Materials'. The exhibition sought to show how the wartime advances in technology and materials were going to affect products and the way of life in peacetime.

'New aluminium saucepans were displayed indicating that a refractory process invented during the war to extend the life of the exhaust stub of the Spitfire could be of domestic use', while some aluminium toys were also shown next to a Lancaster bomber fuel-valve component, both manufactured with the same hands and machines (Sparke 1986b: 131).

There have been those who argued that the *Festival of Britain* produced a design style that was both new, essentially English, and that this had a significant effect on popular taste. This view, associated with what Reyner Banham reluctantly calls the 'Establishment' - a group mostly to be identified with those organising the Festival, is rejected by Banham. Giving architecture and furniture as examples, he argues that the 'Festival Style' was already to be found in modern design elsewhere. Far from being new, Banham says, it was

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<sup>7</sup> See for example Gordon Russell's article *Design in Industry in Design in the Festival*, CoID.

more the case that Britain was catching up and that the style was already more or less 'played out'. Sparke says that whereas the CoID was keen to promote a postwar design style, it was at odds with the requirements of the general public who wanted something that would symbolically express 'the new values of the new age' (Sparke 1986b: 117).

The exhibitions of the *Festival of Britain* were accompanied by a guide, published by the Design Council entitled *Design in the Festival*. The guide clearly set out to promote the Council's view of design, it also revealed a degree of pessimism regarding both the standard of design and public taste. For example Gordon Russell said, '... ugliness has become so usual that its very familiarity recommends itself to some people, who like to boast of hard-headedness'. He continued:

... one can hardly expect to get a high standard of design unless there is a critical and appreciative public. It is much easier to do nothing about it, so long as badly-designed goods continue to sell. But will they continue to sell? Our customers abroad are often more conscious of design than we are. How can we expect to produce a high standard for export unless we have a high standard at home? (Russell in *Council of Industrial Design* 1951: 11).

Other contributors to the guide continued these sentiments: 'There are still too few good contemporary fabrics and wallpapers ...' (Anthony Hunt in *Council of Industrial Design* 1951: 24), 'Graphic design in this country is instinctively conservative ...' (James Shand in *Council of Industrial Design* 1951: 57), 'Such inept borrowing still affects a large proportion of the output of the furniture industry ...' (John Gloag in *Council of Industrial Design* 1951: 14). Such sentiments were never expressed within the pages of the *Ideal Home Exhibition Catalogues*. Where value judgements were made they were always limited to extolling the virtues of the exhibits at the show. The important point in making this comparison between sentiments expressed by the those associated with the CoID and the *Ideal Home Exhibition* catalogues is that, despite claims made from time to time that the *Ideal Home Exhibition* was leading the way with its exhibits, it is likely that they were the very exhibits that were among, or were similar to, those so deprecated by the writers of the *Festival Guide*. Such a view would certainly accord with the general disdain with which the *Ideal Home Exhibition* was generally greeted by the design establishment and design



professionals. However, more important than the attitude of the design establishment towards the Exhibition is the fact that if the aim of the CoID exhibitions was to educate the public in design values both for their own benefit and to pressurise manufacturers to produce goods better suited for export, then the *Ideal Home Exhibition* may well have acted as a countervailing force, reinforcing the very values that the CoID were attempting to change. In making this point, it is important to stress that it would be wrong to give the impression that there was no contact between the CoID and the Exhibition. The CoID was involved in furnishing certain show homes in all but two years between 1947 and 1955. These were, however, normally examples of Ministry provided dwellings and on more than one occasion the furnished examples were accommodation for the elderly.

This chapter has so far been concerned with a discussion of the exhibitions in terms of their contents and the different determinants and methods of selection involved in the choice of items for the CoID exhibitions in comparison with the *Ideal Home Exhibition*. The exhibitions were, however, not only different in their contents, they were different as exhibitions in their layout, design, and determining factors. The aim of the next part of this discussion is to consider the production and design of the exhibitions in order to show how the exhibitions differed, and in what ways this constituted part of the address of the audience.

In terms of making a direct comparison this can most easily be done with *Britain Can Make it*. It was a single site enclosed exhibition closer in scale to the *Ideal Home Exhibition* than the *Festival of Britain*, which was vast in comparison. The Festival consisted of eight official government-funded exhibitions around the country and, in addition to the various land sites, had a travelling exhibition and one on board an aircraft carrier. Furthermore, the South Bank Exhibition itself had a number of buildings and structures including the Festival Hall, the Dome of Discovery, and the Skylon.

According to Carrington part of the success of *Britain Can Make It* was due to the fact that the design of the exhibition was undertaken by 'young men and women who had

energy to spare'. 'Old stagers', he says 'were invited to help selection committees' (Carrington 1976: 172). The exhibition was held in the Victoria and Albert Museum which had not yet been returned to its normal purpose after the War, and offered some 90,000 square feet for exhibition space. James Gardner was put in charge of the exhibition's design and Basil Spence was made the consulting architect. Seventy-five designers worked on the exhibition and individual displays under their direction.

Farr said that 'The exhibition has been severely criticised for its preoccupation with new forms of display technique' (Farr 1955: 237). But he argued that '... although the paper, bunting and strings did sometimes deflect attention from the exhibits', their gaiety and freshness did much to attract the public. However, the reason for the design solution according to James Gardner was that one of the problems confronting him was designing an exhibition that 'would look complete in every detail' even if it was uncertain that there would be exhibits available. He devised a layout where goods were not presented directly but concealed behind corners or alcoves so that the public were attracted 'by the decor and mystery' (Velarde and Gardner in Sparke 1986a: 11)<sup>8</sup>.

Woodham (1983) says that the displays at *Britain Can Make It* benefited from the experience designers gained from wartime propaganda exhibition design. It was organised sectionally in an instructional manner with a third of a mile tour *From War to Peace* that represented the change-over from wartime to peacetime production. The tour include *Shop Window Street* which showed home items such as: glassware, pottery and hardware. There was a section on packaging and a section on industrial design. Like the *Ideal Home Exhibition* it used the device of furnished rooms, of which there were twenty-four. They were specifically class differentiated unlike the *Ideal Home Exhibition* where price was the

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<sup>8</sup> The exhibition played an important role in helping Gardner to establish his reputation as a leading exhibition designer. He was again one of the designers employed by the *Festival of Britain*, and produced a design for a representation of the Crystal Palace, when it was realised that the Festival was omitting to make any reference to 1851. Gardner also worked on displays at the *Ideal Home Exhibition* for example, he designed the British Gas Council pavilion in 1948 and the main Exhibition display in 1957.

indicator of probable social classification. There were also furnished rooms at the *Festival of Britain* in the Homes and Gardens Pavilion, where each room of the house was illustrated. Unlike the *Ideal Home Exhibition* the displays were specifically didactic. The aim was not to sell but to instruct. While it is also true that displays at the *Ideal Home Exhibition* could have an educational perspective, they were different. The CoID was concerned with propagandising a particular design aesthetic: whereas the *Ideal Home Exhibition* was more likely to represent the latest fashion, or the taste of a particular named individual as the furnisher of a show home, and other displays could quite well offer alternative aesthetics.

A more detailed comparison of the two exhibitions can be made by reference to their different layouts, see Figures 1 and 2. Figure 1, the *Britain Can Make It* plan, shows how the tour was strictly structured so that the public was led in a controlled way through the exhibition. This was done so that the logical progression of the exhibition's messages of *From War to Peace* and of ideas about the relation of various aspects of the design process would most clearly be perceived and internalised. There is a relation here between this exhibition's disciplined approach to the inculcation of knowledge through the control of movement and Foucault's ideas about the control of the body. Figure 2, the plan of the *Ideal Home Exhibition*, shows a different layout. The grid arrangement allows free access to any stand at the choice of the visitor. In plan form it could be considered as a representation that the Exhibition is ostensibly about freedom of individual choice. However, the basic reason for the grid layout was economic as this format provided the

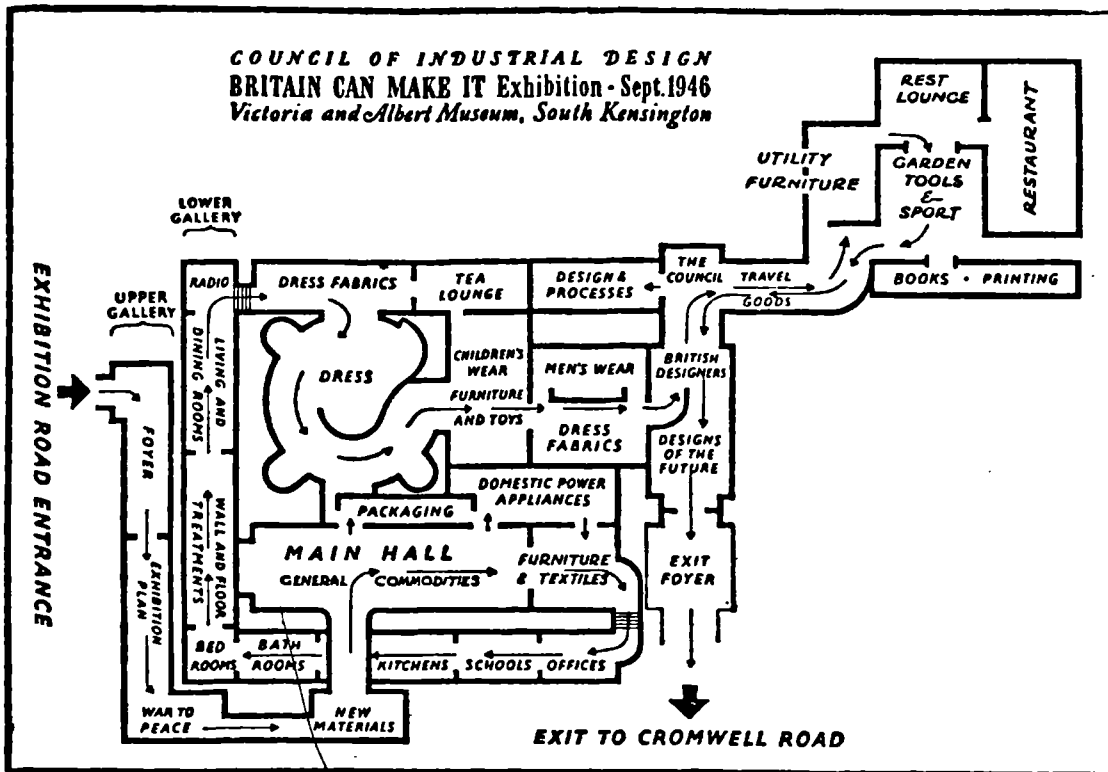


Figure 1: Plan of Britain Can Make It Exhibition.

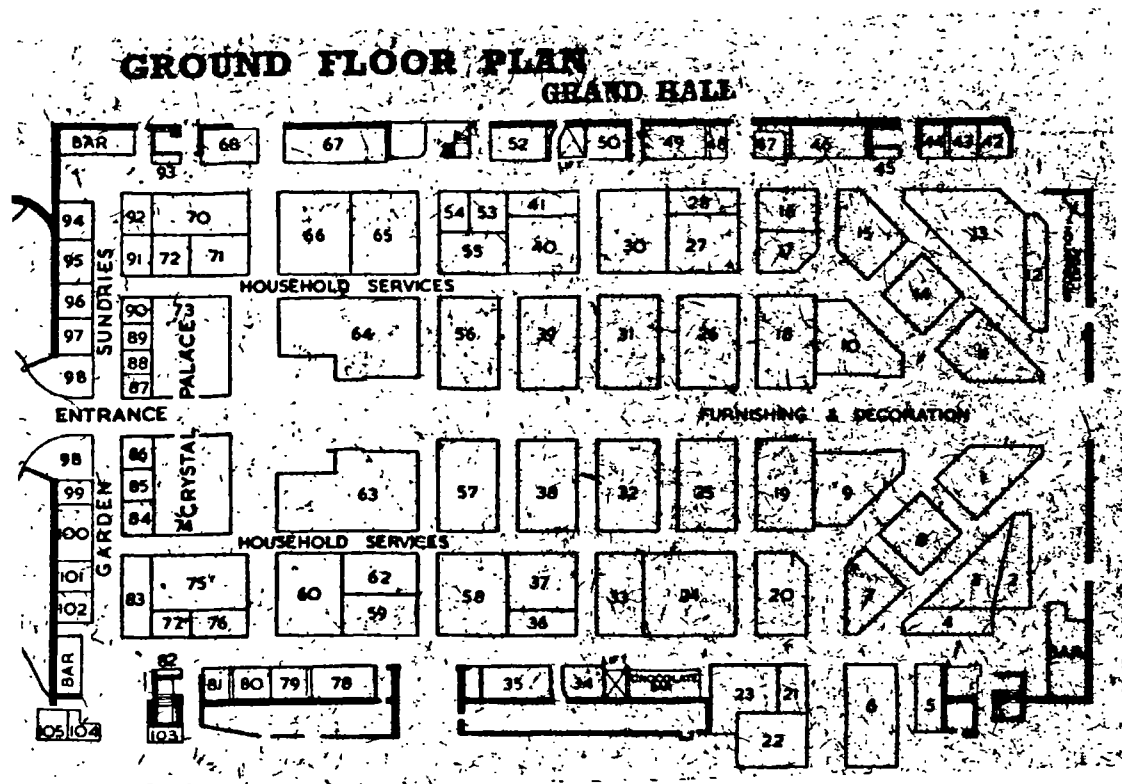


Figure 2: Plan of 1951 Daily Mail Ideal Home Exhibition Grand Hall.

greatest revenue for the given floor area (Lewis 1957: 36). Even with the grid layout, the Exhibition is certainly not unstructured. The gaze of the viewer arriving from the main entrance, on the right of the plan, is directed up the main aisle towards the representation of the Crystal Palace. The largest stands are next to the aisle and closest to the model; they are, the British Electrical Development Association (Stand 63) and The Gas Council (Stand 64). Next to them are the English Electric Company (Stand 57) and Ascot Gas Water Heaters (Stand 56). The smaller less prestigious stands dealing with items like magazines, draft sealing, stoves, and books are at the side (Stands 28, 41, 53 and 54). This plan is not about the control of movement, but about the 'order of things', and in this plan of stands it is ideas of category that order things. The plan allows the visitor to move freely and exercise choice for example, between the different furnishing exhibits of stands 10,11 and 14, but it is choice exercised within the parameters of the Exhibition structure and selection of stands. In this, the plan is a metaphor of the controlled freedom of choice offered by the market in the world outside the Exhibition of which the Exhibition is itself a representation.

The *Ideal Home Exhibition* of this period and the two CoID exhibitions were all well attended. 1,432,546 people, including 43,000 British trade buyers and 7,000 buyers from abroad, attended *Britain Can Make It*. Over a million attended the *Ideal Home Exhibitions* each year for over a decade after the war. The time scales were, however, different. *Britain Can Make It* was open for fourteen weeks<sup>9</sup>, whereas the *Ideal Home* was open each year for less than a month annually, it consequently received a much higher daily attendance.

*Britain can Make It* was the subject of a Mass Observation survey, which was the only real piece of exhibition market research into consumer attitudes of the period, and it is discussed by Bullivant in *Did Britain Make It?* (Sparke (ed.) 1986a). The survey showed

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<sup>9</sup> The *Festival of Britain* was open over the whole Summer of 1951.

that the *Shop Window Street* by Gardner and the *Things In Their Home Setting* designed and co-ordinated by F.R.S. Yorke were the most popular sections in the exhibition. Of the furnished rooms the kitchen, designed by Edna Mosely to represent one appropriate for the family of a working class miner, proved the most popular. Spectators commented that houses needed to be better designed in the first place before it was appropriate to consider internal aesthetics. It would appear that the furnished rooms had something of a 'film set' style of presentation so that spectators did not feel engaged by them as potential examples of how things could really be. Framed pictures were used in the examples of rooms for the more affluent and these were universally disliked. These and other comments again bear witness to the ideas of class that were overtly incorporated into the exhibition. The public strongly rejected anything to do with the 'Utility' range of furniture; it would appear that they liked simplicity but not plainness. In seven out of twelve cases the public and the design experts were in disagreement about what they liked. It appears that the experts placed more emphasis on design conforming to functionality. Penny Sparke comments on the findings by saying:

The conclusion eventually arrived at was that the mass of the British Public wanted more excitement, decoration and fun than they were being offered by that particular exhibition. The exercise served to highlight the gap that existed between the essentially paternalistic, middle-class attitudes of the British design establishment of the time and the desires and aspirations of the general public, a gap which was to become all too evident in the following two decades (Sparke 1986b:110).

The aim of this chapter has been to analyse the immediate postwar exhibition context, including the determinant factors, in order to investigate the specific ways in which the *Ideal Home Exhibition* differed from the other exhibitions of the time, and to account for those differences. What emerges is that, although *Ideal Home Exhibition* and the two exhibitions with which the CoID was connected were held at similar times and all of them included exhibits associated with the home, there were important underlying differences. Fundamental economic factors were of determining significance. The postwar economic situation gave rise to the Government's objective to use industrial design education as part of a strategy to increase overseas trade. The intention was to educate both industrialists and consumers. The *Ideal Home Exhibition* was a market led exhibition which if it sought

to educate consumers at all was in the appropriation of items of consumption not design appreciation.

The differences between the *Ideal Home Exhibition* and the CoID exhibitions were also to do with power, in particular the power to designate the content and to construct the boundaries of definition. The *Festival of Britain* and *Britain Can Make It* both proposed notions of 'good design'. Much of the work of Foucault has been concerned with an analysis of how institutions like those concerned with health, mental illness or penal correction have become involved and operated through the power derived from the defining of discourses. Likewise the CoID was shown to be involved in strategies that operated through the process of definitions of design. It was used by the Government as a tool for its economic and political objectives. Its power was shown in the power to define, to evaluate, and to impose boundaries of categorisation, as exemplified by the Festival 'Stock List' and above all in the power to include or exclude. Essentially the CoID was what Althusser would call an Ideological State Apparatus. It was in this case literally a creation of the state and funded by it. It promoted its view through the exhibitions, through publications like *Design*, through conferences, through formal and informal debates - not least through committees, like the selection panels and committees that administered the *Festival of Britain* and *Britain Can Make It*.

Another way in which Foucault analyses power can be seen in operation in the *Ideal Home Exhibition*. Foucault dismisses traditional hierarchical concepts of power, where power is seen in a monolithic way. Power he argues is everywhere in society and we are all involved in a series of power relations where we are both subject to power and subject others to power. Using the traditional pyramid model of power, one would have expected the organisers of the *Ideal Home Exhibition* to be able to enforce a particular view. The economic context of the Exhibition dictates a different reality. Because exhibitors were paying for their spaces in the show and had the sanction of threatening to withdraw, they were able to apply pressure regarding the place and nature of their exhibits. Although this is fundamentally a question of economic power, it is not just that, it is also the power that

comes with custom and precedent as Lewis says ‘... custom and vested interests have resulted in certain categories of goods always being in the same places. But is this good for the exhibition itself?’ (Lewis nd: 39). Although the CoID was able to sanction a particular set of design values, their need to fill their exhibition with exhibits meant that they also had to compromise with that definition, and had to put on display items that their design ideology could not whole-heartedly endorse. Thus similar issues also operated with the CoID restraining the power they operated through definitions of ‘good design’ and their ability to bestow official approval or rejection.

This chapter has set out to establish that the exhibitions of the CoID and the *Ideal Home* were different in a number of significant ways, institutionally, ideologically and in their economic determinants despite the fact that among other things, they sought to use the language of ideals and to display material objects to do with the construction of the home. The CoID exhibitions were able to promote a particular ‘ideal’ in terms of a design aesthetic because of the control they were able to exert over what was exhibited. Ironically, despite its title the commercial nature of the *Ideal Home Exhibition* meant that it was not able to promote an ‘ideal’ in the same way. The emphasis was on display and spectacle and providing an attraction for the public. A major determinant of the Exhibition was the fact that it was a commercial business and it is this aspect of the Exhibition which will be considered next.



## THE EXHIBITION AS A BUSINESS

### CHAPTER THREE

#### **The Business Aims and Organisation: The Lewis Report**

A central premise of this thesis is that a fundamental determinant of the *Ideal Home Exhibition*, and therefore of the ideals to which it gave representation, was its commercial basis. The aim of this chapter is to provide evidence for this; to show that the business organisation of the Exhibition was primarily concerned with the practical tasks of staging it as an annual event; to show that there was an absence of forward planning; and to substantiate that there was also an absence of any serious reflection on the 'ideals' represented. The purpose of demonstrating this is to establish the basis upon which to build the argument of later chapters, that although the Exhibition met the aspirations of a consuming public, outlined in the first chapter, it did not advance a consciously considered understanding of the 'ideal home'. Such ideals it did represent were partly the result of the commercial relationship of the Exhibition organisers and their trade exhibitors, and partly the ideological viewpoint of those involved which made the values represented in the Exhibition appear as natural and unquestioned examples of the 'ideal'.

The main source of evidence for the view proposed here, and to which reference has already been made, is the *Report on the Ideal Home Exhibition* by Cecil Lewis. This is an unpublished internal report that has not previously been the subject of academic discussion. It provides insights into the outlook of the senior management, and the business organisation of the Exhibition in the immediate postwar period. The Report is a typewritten manuscript of fifty-six pages plus a thirteen page addendum. It is undated, but internal evidence shows that it was mostly written before the 1957 Exhibition, with the addendum added after it. The document appears to have been circulated in carbon copy form, probably to the management of Associated Newspapers, but there is no specific indication as to the recipients. The sources used by Lewis were: past catalogues of the Exhibition; Exhibition photographs; figures provided by the organising department; and information provided by

members of staff<sup>1</sup>. The original document was accompanied by a number of graphs about attendance and finance, but unfortunately this section of the Report is missing, though some of the information is given in the main text.

There is no indication as to why the Report was undertaken, nor why Lewis was asked to do it, particularly as he had ‘no practical inside experience of exhibition work whatsoever’ (Lewis Report nd: 2). The answer to both of these questions may be related. Lewis was a senior figure of wide experience who had only recently arrived at the *Daily Mail*, and it may be that his arrival provided an opportunity for an independent consideration of the Exhibition. Details of Lewis’ experience can be gained from his first autobiography (Lewis 1974).<sup>2</sup> He had been one of the five founding members of the B.B.C., chairing the Programme Board from 1922-1926, and a recipient of a Hollywood Oscar for the script of *Pygmalion*. After a number of occupations around the world he worked, after the war, in New York producing weekly radio programmes for the United Nations (Lewis 1974: 196). In 1952 he was invited to join the staff of Associated Rediffusion to help set up commercial television in Great Britain. The *Daily Mail* provided half the finances for Associated Rediffusion, and when initial financial problems forced a fifty per cent staff reduction, Lewis was offered a job at the *Daily Mail*, in 1956, by the Managing Director of Associated Newspapers, Stuart McClean (Lewis 1974: 199). He was therefore, so far as the *Daily Mail* would have been concerned, something of an expert in the field of public entertainment and communication, and it is possible that the management took advantage of the opportunity that this offered.

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<sup>1</sup> This confirms the nature of sources available at the time, and also therefore the potential areas for current research.

<sup>2</sup> In neither of his two autobiographies does he refer to the *Ideal Home Exhibition*.

Not only does the Report itself give no indication as to why it was instigated, no other sources have been found that shed any light upon it either<sup>3</sup>. The Exhibition was at the height of its popularity so there was not a crisis of attendance that the organisers needed to tackle. There are some references to potential competition from other exhibitions in various specialised areas, but nothing specific is stated. One possibility is that the 'Golden Jubilee' of the 1958 Exhibition was approaching and this may have given rise to some reflection, although the Report indicates that such forward thinking did not usually take place. Lewis' survey of the past Exhibitions shows that he had concluded that the Exhibition was failing to reach the standard of earlier years. 'During the inter-war period this inescapable situation arises. The Ideal Home Exhibition loses its first impetus. Nothing is being done "for the first time". A certain sameness appears. The Organisation - and the people running it - tend to get into ruts. ... Subtly the thing begins to go downhill' (Lewis Report nd: 6). It may be that there was a concern about such matters, an awareness that although the Exhibition was successful with the public it was not maintaining its previous high standard, and that this may have provoked the Report. However, Lewis did have strong personal convictions about standards, and these words may reflect his view alone.

The Report was in three parts: it briefly surveyed the development of the Exhibition; it analysed the postwar organisation and trends; it put forward conclusions and suggestions for the future of the Exhibition. In Lewis' view the interwar period, 'those incredible carefree days of Coward and Cochran and Lubitsch' represented the time when the Exhibition 'reached its peak' (Lewis Report nd: 5). The austerity that followed the Second World War brought with it 'efficiency and "streamlining" in arrangement and organisation; but a certain style and sense of luxury' had been lost. (Lewis Report nd: 7). Indeed Lewis went so far as to say, 'It was felt that the character of the exhibition has

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<sup>3</sup> Michael Carter, one of the longest serving members of the organising staff, knew nothing of the Report, although he knew Lewis.

changed so much since the last war that any detailed analysis of the period between the wars would add little to an understanding of the current trends' Lewis Report nd: 9). There is no indication regarding the ways the postwar Exhibitions were considered different from the pre-war ones. Though, one way it appeared to have changed, to Lewis, at least, was that a more 'public spirited' attitude had given way to the 'far more commercial attitude' of the 'profit motive' (Lewis Report nd: 7).

One of the most revealing comments made by Lewis when examining the postwar period concerned the financial organisation of the Exhibition. He said: 'It would be logical to sum up all these tendencies in a final graph showing the profit as a percentage of expenditure. But these figures have not been made available to the writer. Obviously they are vital to the whole picture ...' (Lewis Report nd: 14). It is most unlikely that these figures were withheld from Lewis, particularly if this was a Report produced for the management and more especially given that Lewis was well connected with the management. Furthermore, he indicates in the Report that he had other financial details of the Exhibition. It looks, therefore, as though the problem was related to the way the Exhibition's finances were organised. A statement later in the same paragraph tends to support this view: 'The Exhibition Department is in the curious position of being, for practical purposes, an independent unit, yet having its gains pooled in the general profits of Associated Newspapers.' This suggests that because the Exhibition had been initiated as a publicity event for the *Daily Mail* its financial organisation had remained integrated with that of the newspaper to the extent that the Exhibition had quite literally no funds of its own. Not only could the profitability of the Exhibition not be established, this also meant that any profit made in a particular year was not available to be reinvested in the staging of subsequent Exhibitions. Lewis deprecated this and likened the staff of the Exhibition Department to a hive of bees having all their honey removed and having to start again next year (Lewis Report nd: 14). The issue here is not simply that figures regarding the Exhibition's profit could not be produced, but what this arrangement reveals about the status, role, and management of the Exhibition in relation to the *Daily Mail*.

The Report's discussion of the staff responsible for devising and organising the Exhibition described the numbers involved as small, and revealed that the role of the Organiser was critical. Lewis described the function of the Organiser as '... Managing Director, Business Manager, Advertising Editor and Editor (or Production Manager) rolled into one' (Lewis Report nd: 47). He criticised the fact that all these tasks were done by one individual, and stated that this would not be the case in radio, television, or film making. The most important feature for setting the style or theme of the annual show was the main decoration or spectacle of the Grand Hall. The Report shows that decisions about this aspect of the Exhibition were 'the final choice of the Board' (Lewis Report nd: 36). 'The Board' being the Board of Management of Associated Newspapers. This shows that whilst the Organiser<sup>4</sup> was responsible for the day to day running of the Exhibition, final control and major decisions were undertaken by the newspaper management. The decisions of the management were based on discussions of models presented to the Board, however, Lewis was critical of these on a number of counts. He argued that they were, in the first place, 'too small'; and second, that they 'tended to viewed from above'. He considered that they needed to be backed up by secondary models and perspective drawings. He further considered that the designs could be improved in general:

There is a tendency to go for the 'Fun Fair' type of decoration - balloons and paper towers - and so achieve a fussy vulgar effect. It is said that no 'ordinary' designer can cope with decoration on the scale of Olympia. In the writers (*sic*) view, nobody, even the experts, has yet planned it on a big enough scale to do justice to the possibilities (Lewis Report nd: 36).

There are indications that a degree of frustration was felt by members of the Department responsible for the Exhibition and that the Organiser or the Board was not making sufficient use of the creative talents of those they employed:

It may be relevant to add at this point that nothing is more damping to creative talent than constantly to have ideas turned down. Within the Architect's Department - and throughout the Department generally - there are plenty of ideas, many of which never

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<sup>4</sup> At the time of the Report the Organiser was L.E.W. Stokes Roberts (*Daily Mail* 5 March 1956: 6).

reach the surface, so to speak. Full opportunity should be given to the enthusiasm of the staff to better the show (Lewis Report nd: 38).

The Report indicates that the Exhibition was significantly determined by the control exercised by the senior management of Associated Newspapers. The results were not the product of design knowledge, but of the choices made by the senior management and financial interests of the newspaper's proprietors.

So far as the actual organisation and running of the Exhibition was concerned, it is clear that there was no forward planning, and that each Exhibition was planned after the previous one had ended. One of Lewis' suggestions was that there should be an overall theme to each Exhibition and that this might best be achieved by planning three years in advance. It is also clear from his comments that this was an innovation (Lewis Report nd: 39 & 43).

Each Exhibition would have various attractions which Lewis called 'features'. They could be considered as being of three different kinds: those initiated by the organisers and for which they allocated space and bore the cost; those which were considered as concessional features, where the organisers provided space at a nominal cost; and those that were purely commercial, where the firm concerned bore all the expense. Lewis argued that commercial features should be required to fit in with any overall theme, and that they should not be repeated 'year after year'. It would appear therefore that the organisers had not exercised tight control over the nature of the commercial features, and may not have exercised much, if any, control at all (Lewis Report nd: 35).

The exhibitors attracted to the Exhibition fell into three main categories; manufacturers, retailers, and manufacturer / retailers. Those running the Exhibition were of the opinion that there was an increase in the number of manufacturers exhibiting at the show. This was found not to be the case, there was in fact a steady increase in the number of manufacturer / retailers exhibiting, a fact that was drawn to the attention of the Sales Section. This lack of

awareness of the true facts and their implications, is a further example of the somewhat amateurish organisation and running of the Exhibition (Lewis Report nd: 17).

An analysis made of those who had exhibited since the war showed that fifty-one exhibitors had been there every year. The total of those who had exhibited once only was eight hundred and fifty-nine, a number that was considered both surprising and alarming. It was accepted that exhibitors in the 'Fashion' and 'Leisure and Pleasure' sections would be more transitory, but only the 'Labour Saving' section had a core of regular exhibitors returning annually (Lewis Report nd: 17). Lewis stated:

Old friends show a healthy exhibition: too much 'floating' shows an uneasy one. The floating total is at present a matter for concern.

As a factual instance, in 1956, 151 exhibitors (36%) who had taken part in the 1955 show (our best year ever), dropped out in spite of its success, and were replaced by 118 new exhibitors. ...

These graphs explain why such effort has to be put into selling the exhibition every year. It reinforces the question asked elsewhere in this report as to whether the Sales Organisation is properly equipped to deal with the situation the graphs reveal (Lewis Report nd: 18).

Exhibitors were considered to display at the Exhibition for three main reasons:

- 1) For prestige, to maintain their good name and keep it before a large public.
- 2) The help in the campaign of launching a new product or line of goods.
- 3) To sell a commodity.

(Lewis Report nd: 18)

Only the second of these reasons was considered to be consistent with a 'floating' population of exhibitors, the first and the last it was felt should have produced a more permanent clientele. There are a few marginal notes in an unknown hand, here and elsewhere, commenting on Lewis' observations. They appear from their content to be made by one of the original recipients of the Report. The note at this point says, 'Figures horrific compare with press'. This suggests that Lewis' concern about the substantial turnover of exhibitors was shared and considered to be a significant issue. Lewis said that this was a real problem confronting the Sales Department and one which raised a number of questions: were the charges correct; did the stands offer the right amount of space in an appropriate shape; were exhibitors receiving adequate service from the organisers; was there sufficient follow-up after the show was over? There seems to be a clear indication that the management

of the *Ideal Home Exhibition* had not handled their relationships with their exhibitors at all well:

It seems that in the past we have adopted a rather haughty attitude to the casual exhibitor, because it was easy to sell space. But we are now on a buyer's market and cannot afford not to offer the maximum of co-operation, In any case this is all part of the basic attitude of 'goodwill', the original mainspring of the exhibition (Lewis Report nd: 19).

Not only was there a high turnover in the firms exhibiting at the show, but as the quotation above reveals, Exhibition space was 'becoming more difficult to sell' (Lewis Report nd: 29). No explanation for this is given although a reference to the threat posed by specialised shows follows soon after this comment. One of the reasons why some firms were no longer exhibiting was related to issues to do with 'Agents'. Lewis spoke about 'reversing our attitude towards Agents' saying that this could result 'in a more co-operative attitude': but he also spoke of being 'at the mercy of Agents and being no longer free to deal with the principals ourselves' (Lewis Report nd: 30). In the past there had been a 'tendency to keep exhibitors at arms length', and Lewis argued that they should adopt a different attitude, namely one that researched their needs and provided ways of responding to them (Lewis Report nd: 29).

While Lewis was happy that the Exhibition should support 'up and coming firms', he considered that a number of firms that had been accepted by the Exhibition were 'second rate opportunists' (Lewis Report nd: 44). He was concerned that the Exhibition had lost a number of top furnishing and decorating houses, and argued that the effort should be made to bring them back even, if necessary, 'at some sacrifice' (Lewis Report nd: 44). What he meant by this was presumably either offering a concessionary rate, or not having present in the show other firms offering similar but significantly inferior products. The latter possibility is suggested because the Report states that some firms had left because they considered exhibiting alongside displays of inferior quality goods reflected badly on their own product and market position (Lewis Report nd: 46). Some of the more prestigious



houses concerned with fashion and beauty would not attend while 'cheap firms' were also present (Lewis Report nd: 46).

Lewis proposed having a scale of charges as a way of structuring the Exhibition. Higher charges would accrue to the more advantageously placed sites and to those placed close to special (crowd attracting) features in the Exhibition. Such a scale of charges would assist the Sales Department to 'classify' the exhibitors and thus improve the presentation of the Exhibition (Lewis Report nd: 45). The general thrust of the Report where this point is made, would appear to indicate that the problem was related to the fact that certain important exhibitors returned annually and demanded their personally favoured locations in the show. Such demands for a particular location could be accompanied by threats of withdrawal if their stands were situated elsewhere. Lewis stated that some fairly dull stands - 'gas and wallpapers' - occupied positions which, from the organiser's or a designer's point of view, required stands of a much more visually interesting impact (Lewis Report nd: 39). The suggestion was that past practice had assumed the status of precedent. Lewis recommended that, if exhibitors wanted to occupy a position that was important to the visual impact of the Exhibition, as a prerequisite: '... the condition must be that their exhibit is designed in such a way that it can hold up to that position ...' (Lewis Report nd: 40). This again reveals how commercial economic factors rather than design considerations had determined the nature, content, and structure of the Exhibition.

Just as the exhibitors were motivated by their own commercial interests, so the organisers appear to have been equally driven by commercial considerations. The potential tension between the commercial interests and the requirements of staging a good show is expressed in other statements in the Report, for example: 'Naturally the "bread and butter" parts of the exhibition must be catered for, but they must not override the desire of the organisers to provide a show for the public that is gay, exciting and new every year'; and, '... if we want to kill the exhibition, the best way is to neglect its need for showmanship ...' (Lewis Report nd: 40). One of Lewis' main concerns was that financial issues dominated to the detriment of

the actual staging of the Exhibition. He criticised the reluctance to provide space for features which might be attractive to the public saying: 'The thinking should NOT be: we are losing rental and so losing money; it should be we are providing such a magnificent exhibition that nobody can stay out of it even if we double our price per square foot to exhibitors' (Lewis Report nd: 40 (emphasis as original)).

Lewis' desire to retain or re-attract the more prestigious firms relates directly to the notion of 'ideal', in that they could contribute an element of luxury. He specifically suggested having a luxury section 'of some sort'; 'People like to see exceptional things, even if they cannot afford them - just as women go to fashion shows to marvel at mink coats they cannot possibly buy. In such matters we have a public responsibility. We must direct the trend in our own show, not allow it to direct us' (Lewis Report nd: 44).

Interestingly, the use of the word 'luxury' becomes more prevalent in editorial content and house descriptions of the Exhibition Catalogues after Lewis' Report than before. Some twenty passages contain the word, but fifteen of these date from 1958 or later. This cannot have been influenced by Lewis' comments because the descriptions were provided independently. It may therefore indicate an underlying change in the market, of more basic needs having been met, and an increase in feelings of prosperity. The increase in the use of the term 'luxury' does not imply that luxury items were not shown before this time, rather that the word was not applied. An example of luxury at the Exhibition before the Lewis Report is the 'model kitchen' organised for the show by the *Daily Mail* writer, Margaret Sherman, in 1951. It was a display that would have been beyond the pocket of almost every visitor.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> See Page 165.

In an interview, David Clendon, discussed visiting the Exhibition in the early 1960's. He described, in a manner similar to that suggested by Lewis, the way people viewed the representations of luxury:

*You were talking the other day of it (the Exhibition) being like a Cathedral, where you went and worshipped the house you couldn't have so instead you had gadgets ...*

Yes, I think people probably went for a very good day out. And you would want to take something home with you. So I think most people went with the idea of finding something that was going to make life easier ... and innovative I think ... new sorts of potato peelers and wire cutters for doing this and that and the other, and multi-graters, those sort of things. But I think that the central thing you went to look at were these designer houses, with designed furniture - which was the 'ideal home' of your dream. And you went there, and looked round there, and then took away something that would remind you ... be a partaker of the dream as it were, you might not have it all, but at least you had this marvellous thing, which you then showed your neighbours ...

Clendon's description brings together the experience of those sections of the Exhibition that were spectacles of luxury, with those Lewis describes as the 'hawkers' and 'peddlers' so that, for the impecunious visitor, the one became the signifier of the other. This latter element was considered to be 'good fun and good value' having a rightful place in 'their own section' as a 'Bazaar or Market' despite Lewis' emphasis on improving the overall quality of the Exhibition (Lewis Report nd: 45).

Lewis' recommendations, which he summarised at the end of the Report, may briefly be stated as:

1. Putting the show not profit first.
2. Giving the Exhibition a more international character, and showing the best the world could produce in terms of domestic design.
3. Increasing expenditure on the Exhibition so that it surpassed its pre-war standard both in scale and imagination. A special fund, and space allocation, to be established for sponsored features.
4. A restructuring of admission charges to attract greater attendance at slack periods such as the first and last weeks of the show.
5. A concerted attempt to re-attract some of the 'big houses' and the 'gradual elimination of the class of exhibitor that really cheapens the show'.

6. The establishment of a new planning and features section, that would have a budget, a floor allocation, and a remit to plan three years ahead.
7. An examination of staffing levels, with a view to increasing them - possibly running some form of second annual exhibition to justify the increased availability of labour in slack periods.

For Lewis, these points together constituted an overall determination to make the Exhibition the finest in the world, and this he considered should begin with the fiftieth anniversary in 1958.

Early in his Report, Lewis had described 'socialism' and 'labour' as 'extreme' (Lewis Report nd: 3) in a manner that suggests he did not anticipate any disagreement from his reader (and this is of interest in supporting the view that the underlying political stance of those responsible for the Exhibition corresponded with the Conservative view of the *Daily Mail*). Nevertheless, although Lewis regarded 'labour' as extreme, he was equally against the profit motive regarding it as a polite term for greed, and he goes to some lengths to make this point - hence the first of his recommendations. He argued that the Exhibition had begun as an act of 'goodwill' and that it was essential to return to that vision; that surpluses should not be simply pocketed but part should be reinvested as a 'dividend to the customer' (Lewis Report nd: 22).

In earlier years the Ideal Home Exhibition was very largely a broad goodwill gesture to the trade and public generally, It was a splendidly conceived piece of publicity for the Daily Mail. Then, rather surprisingly, it turned into a profit spinner. Now this has become all important. But the attitude is unbalanced. To make a broad and magnanimous gesture to the public is the surest way to keep the show in public favour and a balance in the bank (Lewis Report nd: 30).

There are indications that the plea to look beyond profit 'fell on deaf ears'. In the Addendum, following the 1957 Exhibition, Lewis said that although 'to judged by worldly standards' the Exhibition had 'been an unqualified success, the writer continues impenitently to beat his lonely drum' (Lewis Report nd: Addendum 1).

Despite the success of the 1957 Exhibition, Lewis was highly critical. His first and most stringent criticism was focused on the content. Lewis acknowledged that the very success of the 1957 Exhibition could make such criticism appear ill founded, especially as he was generous in his praise for what had been achieved: 'Certainly also the overall decor of the Grand Hall was pleasant and harmonious. The experience of the Organiser - and his whole team - brought a high professional level of skill to the mounting of the Exhibition. It had the 'grand manner'. An atmosphere of prosperity and success pervaded it. It is unique.' Lewis continued by stating that anyone who set out to improve things in the current climate of success was at a disadvantage. He characterised the prevailing view as: 'The thing is all right as it is. Leave it alone. ... All that is wanted in 1958 is 'the mixture as before'. Despite this he declared himself 'not the least impressed'. Because he considered, '...there is absolutely nothing there. Nothing that any intelligent person would cross the road to see - if he did not happen to want a cooker or some wallpaper. If a gigantic selling platform is the sole object of the exercise, then it has been triumphantly achieved - there is nothing more to be said.' (Lewis Report nd: Addendum 1).

Despite the fact that they represented a small percentage of the population, the importance for Lewis of those whom he termed the 'intelligent public' was their influence on public taste and opinion. He claimed that he was not writing from any 'snobbish or highbrow attitude', though he clearly considered that the general population was easily influenced by opinion makers. The problem was, these opinion makers were the very people who did not attend the Exhibition because, as he repeated: '... there is nothing for them to see' (Lewis Report nd: Addendum 9). Lewis supported this argument by referring to the survey undertaken by Gallup on the Exhibition at Charing Cross Underground Station: '... which demonstrates that people are not only receptive to, but appreciative of, good design and choose it, given the opportunity, in preference to the ugly and shoddy substitute. We are

likely, therefore, to find a very ready response to any efforts we may make' (Lewis Report nd: Addendum 9)<sup>6</sup>.

Another criticism raised was the glaring omissions in the contents of some sections. 'Fashion and Beauty' was particularly criticised for this.

To have a Fashion & Beauty Section in which no

Cosmetics

Dress Fabrics

Stockings (except under British Nylon Spinners)

Underwear

Hats

Garments

Perfumery (except the cheapest houses)

participate is clearly ridiculous. There are various reasons for non-participation in which offence to retailers, specialized exhibitions, export trade and professional jealousy all play their part (Lewis Report nd: 45).

Similar problems obtained in the 'Leisure and Pleasure' section. Lewis argued that having titles for sections where there were major omissions, either of goods or exhibitors, was not only misleading to the public, but reflected badly on the Exhibition. In his opinion therefore, the title of sections required careful attention so that they reflected the content.

It is immediately apparent on looking at the recommendations that Lewis had an overall concern to improve the standard and quality of the Exhibition, which at one point he compared unfavourably to a mammoth department store (Lewis Report nd: 28). This was not only a reflection of his analysis of the Exhibition, but also of his own character. He admitted in his first autobiography that when he left Associated Rediffusion it was probably right for the company because: 'I had certain ideals of quality which were offbeat in a strictly commercial organisation. It was the sort of rat-race in which I had really no place.'

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<sup>6</sup> Market research is discussed in Chapter 4.

(Lewis 1974: 199). Although Lewis wanted to invest more money in the Exhibition, his proposals were not extreme. At the time the Report was prepared, the ratio of expenditure was 52% on overheads, 33% on Exhibition costs, and 15% on publicity. Lewis wanted to adjust this to a ratio of 40 : 40 : 20 (Lewis Report nd: 31).

Particularly damning was Lewis' view that it was not the crowds that kept people of good taste away from the Exhibition but its 'dullness' (Lewis Report nd: 28). Making the Exhibition international, at a time when people were beginning to travel and see foreign countries on television, was both a way of renewing Northcliffe's original vision, and of raising standards in the Exhibition: 'The fact is that style and design abroad is often better than at home.' Lewis' solution of making the Exhibition international was considered risky because events in foreign countries might create problems for their plans. Lewis argued that this was 'Better, at least, than our present dangerous trend - to sell space at all costs, and in many cases, let people in who have nothing to do with an Ideal Home at all' (Lewis Report nd: 26).

The previous chapter referred to the anxieties of immediate postwar politicians about the competition British goods faced from foreign competitors; ten years later Lewis was worried that the Exhibition was 'a vast showcase of indifferent British goods' (Lewis Report nd: 25). If the immediate postwar CoID and politicians were correct that British goods suffered from poor design standards and that British industry was inadequately managed, then the *Ideal Home Exhibition* was likely to be a victim of these failings. Part of this problem lay with the way the Exhibition was managed unlike the CoID exhibitions where control over the exhibits was exercised by those with design expertise, Lewis said of the management:

With due respect, it is necessary to make the following point. Those responsible for running a great chain of newspapers are not, necessarily, men in the 'avant-garde' of public taste. Northcliffe may have been said to have been a leader of public opinion. To-day the popular press does not lead the public, they serve it. The result is that in certain respects they can easily lag behind it. So there is a tendency to look upon the need for a progressive attitude towards all 'cultural' matters as a minority or highbrow attitude. But an organisation such as the Ideal Home Exhibition needs an element on the

staff whose interest lies in bettering public taste to leaven the dough of the commercial side ... (Lewis Report nd: Addendum 10).

In expressing his concern about the uneven content of the Exhibition, and about the poor standard of the design of many of the exhibits, Lewis echoed the criticisms of 'the design establishment'; and it is therefore somewhat ironic that his own efforts should be so witheringly attacked by the *Architects Journal* as quoted in the introduction to this thesis. For despite the *Architects Journal* view of Lewis' shortcomings in interior furnishing, he, perhaps alone, saw a need for the Exhibition to improve the standards of the designs it represented as 'ideal', and he wanted to involve those with the appropriate expertise in this project. Part of Lewis' notion of paying a dividend to the customer was to put on an Exhibition that would affect change and improvement in the home. He wanted to 'co-operate with the progressive people in the building, decorative and furnishing trades.' Lewis commented that: 'The fact that our own Design Centre, for example, is not included in the exhibition is indicative of our current attitude. They cannot afford a stand. But they represent a progressive tendency - the best of commercial design in Britain'. He argued that supporting the Design Centre would not only show their own 'progressive attitude' but would help in the dissemination of 'ideas in good design' and 'raise standards'. Next to the reference to the Design Centre a marginal note observed: 'Discussion. ? we can do it. Council of Industrial Design. Supply design idea. How?' (Lewis Report nd: 26). Despite these comments, the CoID had no further involvement with the Exhibition until 1962 when there was a CoID stand. This suggests that despite Lewis' plea, and the marginal note, the suggestion came to nothing.<sup>7</sup>

Lewis' recommendations to improve the show came at a time when the Exhibition was at the height of its popularity. Although no one was to know it at the time, the attendance

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<sup>7</sup> Reference was made in the previous chapter to the CoID involvement in the Exhibition through furnishing some of the show houses. The fact that Lewis and the author of the marginal note felt that there was an absence of representation at the Exhibition show that the CoID involvement was minimal.



figures were due to begin a slow decline. Not only were the organisers not in a position to know what the future held, but the Exhibition took place after the ‘Suez Crisis’ of the previous November, which affected a number of exhibitors, and was especially detrimental to the International Section. Without this adverse situation, there are indications in the Report that the organisers thought the numbers attending might have been even higher (Lewis Report nd: Addendum 3). Viewed from the perspective of the organisers in 1957, the Exhibition would have appeared to them as a occasion of ever increasing success, and any criticism would therefore have appeared to be running against the tide of this success. There was therefore no pressure to take Lewis’ views seriously. It also needs to be said that Lewis was a somewhat idiosyncratic figure caught up in an obscure school of mysticism; and there are times in his Report when he is inclined to hint at this or make sweeping historical generalisations<sup>8</sup>. This may also have been a factor that meant that his comments were not taken as seriously as his experience warranted. Furthermore despite the fact that there was a slight downturn in the numbers attending the Exhibition after 1957<sup>9</sup>, there were no real signs of decline. The prestige and national significance of the Exhibition was witnessed by the willingness of the broadcast media to give coverage to the Exhibition despite rival newspapers being reluctant to feature it. For example, in 1956 the *Daily Mail* wrote:

Gaumont British, Universal Movitone and Paramount newsreels will be showing the Ideal Home Exhibition to audiences throughout Britain in the next few days.

Television viewers have already seen wide coverage of the show on both B.B.C. and ITV news and newsreel.

The B.B.C. Children’s Television Newsreel has been to Olympia too, and children will be having their own showing of the Exhibition shortly (*Daily Mail* 9 March 1956: 3).

Again in 1961 the *Daily Mail* wrote:

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<sup>8</sup> E.g. ‘In the Florentine Renaissance, for instance, Florence was the Gold Market of Europe. Petty wars were going on all the time. Side by side with all this a vigorous school of Art flourished, throwing off masters like Fra Angelico and Michael Angelo and, back of it all, was a profoundly devoted attitude to the religious life. So in a whirlpool of activity, there was harmony. The three parts of life were well balanced. It was a “good life”.’ (Lewis Report nd: 21)

<sup>9</sup> See Chapter 4 for a discussion of attendance figures.

The B.B.C. is giving wide coverage to the Ideal Home Exhibition during this opening week both on radio and television.

Today Brian Johnston gives a preview in the Home Service breakfast time magazine *Today* and on the spot commentators will cover the show for *Woman's Hour* at 2 p.m.

On Thursday the Light Programme's *Roundabout* and B.B.C. TV's *Children's Newsreel* visit Olympia.

Each Saturday at 1.10 p.m. there will be interviews with celebrities at the Exhibition in the programme *In Town Today* (*Daily Mail* 7 March 1961: 3).

As the readership profile was very similar to that of those attending the Exhibition<sup>10</sup>, the Exhibition was also likely to be of particular interest to readers of the *Daily Mail*, and the way the newspaper reported the Exhibition is, in addition to the Lewis Report, revealing of the business relationship between the newspaper and the Exhibition. One would expect that the *Daily Mail* would have had a natural interest in publicising the Exhibition, and that it would have taken every opportunity to provide it with 'free' publicity in the pages of the newspaper. It is therefore surprising to discover the somewhat erratic nature of the coverage given to the Exhibition by the *Daily Mail* when examined as a matter of overall content. Each year there was reference to the opening of the Exhibition in the newspaper and through the three and a half weeks that followed, other articles would appear, but there is considerable variation in coverage when one year is compared with another. In making this observation one limiting factor that clearly needs to be considered is the size of the newspaper, particularly in the years of rationing and shortages immediately after the war. In the years 1947 and 1948 it was a folded sheet of four pages. From 1949 to 1950 it was increased to six pages and then in 1950 to eight and even, on occasion, twelve pages. In the next ten years the newspaper again doubled in size. Thus in the later years more space was available to develop feature articles.

That the availability of newsprint was not a factor in the degree of coverage can be shown if the years 1951 and 1953 are compared. The latter year provides an example of when the

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<sup>10</sup> See page 105.

coverage was relatively sparse. There was an article on 2 March by Charles W.V. Truefitt, the Organiser, promoting the show the day before it opened. There was a second promotional article, mildly disguised as a news story the next day, opening day. The same edition also carried a picture spread of the Queen visiting at the preview together with a picture of the replica of the State Coach to be used at her Coronation. After this, only two more articles followed, on 12 and 20 March, making a total of no more than five editorial items. However, during this year the Exhibition was promoted by the paper through a competition. This was announced on the 4 March, and featured on several occasions thereafter<sup>11</sup>. In contrast with 1953, 1951 is an example of a year when much greater coverage was given. Again there was a promotional article by Truefitt, there were then four news items over the next three days, and a further seven over the remainder of the Exhibition between 12 March and 28 March. In addition, there was a series of nine picture features depicting the gardens at the Exhibition, making a total of twenty editorial items. The years 1951 and 1953 show a considerable variation in the amount of coverage given to the show although the paper had the same number of pages in each year. 1957 provides another example of sparse coverage, it resembles 1953 but in a more exaggerated form. In this year there was a large amount of publicity at the beginning of the Exhibition; on 4 March the paper published a four page preview. On the opening day, 5 March, there was a front page news story and a full page inside article with photographs. After that there were only three further articles, two on 13 March, and one on the 19 March. Analysis of the editorial material shows that in those years, like 1957, when there were fewer references to the Exhibition in the *Daily Mail*, most of the articles were published close to the opening of the show.

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<sup>11</sup> Interestingly despite the lack of editorial coverage, 1953 was one of what Lewis describe as 'successful years' - the 'bi-annual dip' he referred to coming in the intervening year. See paper on attendance figures.

Given that the Exhibition was of sufficient interest to achieve coverage in the broadcast media, it is not surprising that reports featured in the *Daily Mail* itself. What is surprising is that the Exhibition did not feature much more prominently in the paper that sponsored it. Generally, in their promotion of the Exhibition, the *Daily Mail* and the Exhibition organisers were not reticent in the claims they made about it, and their descriptions clearly show the way the Exhibition was mediated as a spectacle of entertainment and display. For example in 1947, the first Exhibition after the war, the *Daily Mail* wrote 'Long before the war the Exhibition had become a national institution to which hundreds of thousands flocked each year...' (The *Daily Mail* 4 March 1947: 2). Another example is provided by one of the promotional articles in 1953 which began by describing the show as 'the greatest market in the world' (The *Daily Mail* 3 March 1953: 6). A further example is the heading of a promotional feature in 1958 consciously borrowing from Barnum and Bailey and describing the Exhibition as 'The Greatest Show on Earth' (The *Daily Mail* 3 March 1958: 10). Although the newspaper mediated the Exhibition as a great event, the variation in coverage that it received becomes more intelligible when the Exhibition is seen as a publicity vehicle for the newspaper, rather than the newspaper as a source of 'free' publicity for the Exhibition. This supports the view given by Lewis' Report that the focus of interest at the *Daily Mail* and the management of Associated Newspapers was on the newspaper and the profit the Exhibition could make for it.

To summarise, Lewis' Report provides a snapshot view of the Exhibition two-thirds of the way through the period with which this discussion is concerned, given from the position of a critical, if somewhat idiosyncratic insider. Its evidence shows that the fact that because the Exhibition was initiated to publicise the *Daily Mail* newspaper and not as a project in its own right, this strongly influenced the way the Exhibition was organised. The result was that its financial structure was totally integrated with that of the newspaper to the point where the true profitability of the Exhibition could not be determined. As it was there to publicise the newspaper, the newspaper spent rather less space on publicising the Exhibition than might

have been otherwise expected. Because it was not a properly organised business in its own right, but was a department within the newspaper, the Exhibition was run from Exhibition to Exhibition with little or no forward planning. The result was that its original freshness and style had been lost and it had become somewhat formulaic. Lewis expressed his concern about the dullness of the Exhibition, it was in danger of being little more than a sales platform of goods that were of an indifferent standard of design. The major decisions were taken by the Management Board of Associated Newspapers, a group not best equipped to provide a lead on matters of design. Equally the day to day running was the responsibility of the Organiser, whose responsibilities required too many different skills from one individual. In Lewis' view the commercial success of the Exhibition as a source of profit to the newspaper had become the dominant value of the organisation. The major source of revenue was that derived from the exhibitors, and a number of difficulties were being experienced in that quarter. Lewis argued that the standard of exhibitor was not sufficiently high in all sections of the Exhibition, and noted that there was an increasing threat from the development of other exhibitions dealing with various aspects related to the home. There was the further problem of the high and constant turnover in the firms that exhibited at the Exhibition. The consequence was that exhibitors were able to make demands that, in a different context, might have been resisted. The result of all of these factors was that sales figures rather than design values were the main determinant of the Exhibition's representations of the 'ideal'.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Market Research and Attendance Statistics

Cecil Lewis' Report, discussed in the previous chapter, provided evidence regarding the *Ideal Home Exhibition* as a business. It shed light on the relationship between the organisers and the exhibitors; the role played by commercial considerations; and the consequences for the organisation of the Exhibition of its relationship with the *Daily Mail* newspaper. The aim of this chapter is to discuss the findings of market research surveys undertaken by the Exhibition in order to consider how the organisers viewed the Exhibition's visiting public and, in addition, to discuss what the organiser's approach to such research reveals about their business practice. The attendance statistics register the degree of popularity that the Exhibition achieved with the public, and the scale with which it acted as an intervention in postwar discourses of the home. This intervention was a commercial one made through the representations of the organisers and the exhibitors, and these representations will be considered in later chapters. The concern here is to show how it was commercial considerations that acted as significant determinants of the way the Exhibition approached and sought to position its audience, and that it was these forces that helped to shape the Exhibition's representations and other aspects of its address.

The first *Daily Mail Ideal Home Exhibition* to be held after the war in 1947 was attended by over 1.1 million people, a figure which nearly doubled the highest pre-war attendance. However, despite the fact that the Exhibition was a significant public event that had been in existence for nearly fifty years, the organisers appear to have shown little interest in gathering information about their visitors. What Cecil Lewis' Report clearly shows is that no market research was undertaken prior to a Gallup survey in 1957; this appears to have been instigated as part of his research. Although there had been no detailed analysis of who had attended the Exhibition, Lewis' Report shows that there were records of ticket sales. The number of children's tickets sold enabled the ratio of adults to children attending to be calculated, and this showed that, in Lewis' words, 'barely 4%' of those who came to the

show were children. (This figure doubled to 8% in 1957, but no explanation for this increase is suggested in the Report.) The figures, given by Lewis, show that when the Exhibition began in 1908 the attendance was 160,000. The numbers grew steadily over the years, in 1924 there were 300,000 visitors and, just before the war, this had risen to 620,000 in 1937. After the war the shift to attendances exceeding 1 million was maintained for about two decades with a record of 1,329,644 in 1957. This sudden shift is probably in the first instance an indication of the prominent position that issues of housing and the home held in the minds of a large section of the public after the war. But it may also have combined with the great desire to return to normality after the war. The Exhibition was not the only event to be well attended at this time; there were, for example, very high attendances at cricket matches for some years after the war<sup>1</sup>. Altogether in the fifty years that spanned the opening of the first Exhibition and the production of the Lewis Report, some 23 million people had visited the Exhibition.

The results of the market research conducted by Gallup on the 1957 Exhibition were added as an appendix to Cecil Lewis' Report, but regrettably they are now missing from the text that has survived. Fortunately, however, some of the figures do appear in a report on market research conducted in 1961. This report quotes and makes comparisons with the 1957 figures, and it also provides evidence that there was no market research undertaken in the intervening years. The market research for 1961 was conducted by *AN* (Associated Newspapers Ltd Research and Statistics Department). Market research has also been found in the Angex 'archives' for the years 1973, 1974, 1976 and 1979. This coincides with the establishment of Angex (Associated Newspapers Group Exhibitions) in 1973 as the organisers of the Exhibition.

Although only two market research reports were commissioned during the period being examined in this thesis, total attendance figures for each year were recorded. These figures,

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<sup>1</sup> The World at One, BBC Radio Four 23 April 1997.

which were subsequently published by the *Daily Mail*, provide evidence of the overall trends in attendance at the Exhibition. These are shown in the graph Figure 3 which plots the total attendance figures from 1947 to 1976<sup>2</sup>. The year 1957 clearly emerges as the high point and the steady decline in attendance after that is also apparent. The figures for 1967, 1968 and 1975 are omitted because they were not published. The low figure of 845,743 for 1969 was partly the result of an electrician's strike. In 1973 there was a railway strike and work to rule for fifteen of the twenty-three days of the Exhibition, however the previous year had also fallen below the one million mark.

One of the things that is immediately noticeable is the marked bi-annual pattern in attendances in the first decade of postwar Exhibitions. The odd numbered years receive a higher attendance than the even numbered years. Lewis drew attention to this in his Report, but he was unable to find any explanation. He examined pre-war attendance figures back to 1924, but did not find any bi-annual pattern there. He discussed some suggestions that had been proposed but was not convinced by them, and it is clear from his Report that the organisers were at a loss to explain this phenomena.

It is just possible that two factors might explain this. Later statistics show that a very high proportion, between two thirds and three quarters, of visitors stated that they attended regularly. It could be that a proportion of them chose to go every other year rather than annually. Statistically one would expect bi-annual attendance to be evenly distributed between the years so that no significant variation would be discernible in the overall attendance figure. This might combine, however, with a second factor, namely determinants associated with particular years. 1947 was the year of the first post-war Exhibition, 1951 was the year of the *Festival of Britain*, and 1953 was the year of the coronation of Elizabeth II. The Exhibition certainly capitalised on these last two events as part of its mediation. There were also negative factors: Cripps imposed a wage freeze in February 1948; the

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<sup>2</sup> The actual figures are listed in Appendix 1.



pound was substantially devalued in September 1949; 1956 was the year of the Suez crisis and although military action did not take place until October of that year, the graphs in Figures 8-10 all show a downturn in consumer expenditure for that year resulting from the problems associated with it. These attractions and political events may well have combined to develop the bi-annual attendance noted by Lewis.

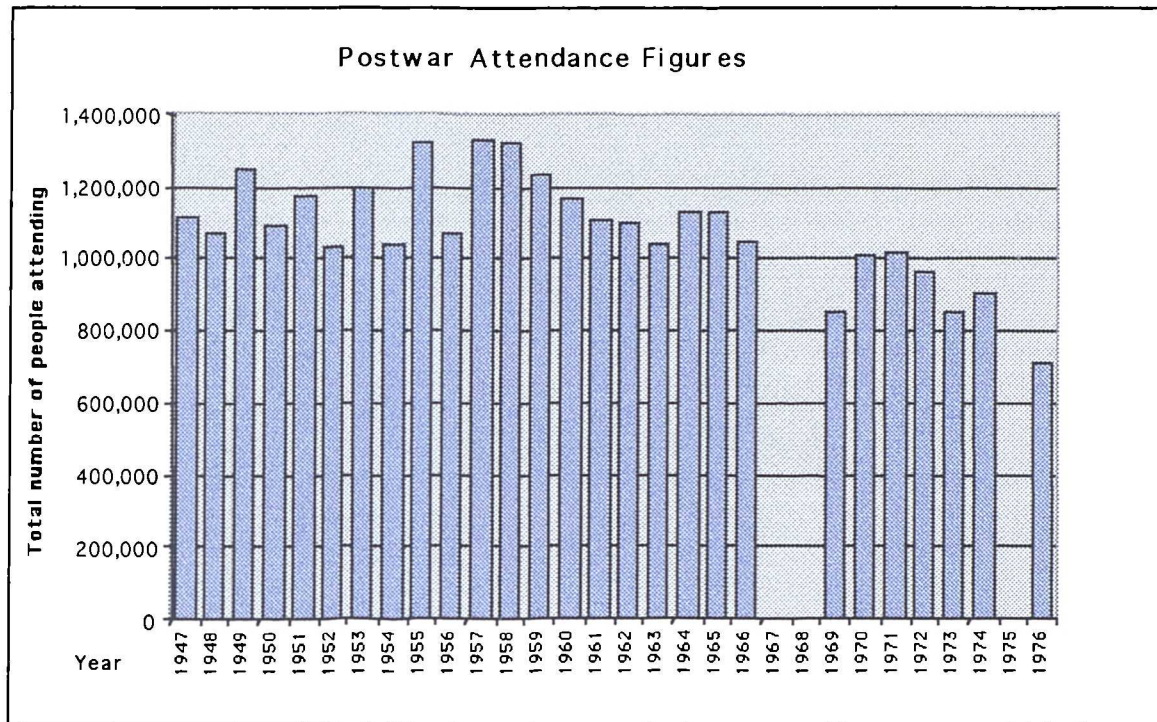


Figure 3: The postwar rise and decline of the Ideal Home Exhibition.  
(Chart compiled from data given in Appendix 1)

The research conducted by Gallup in 1957 is quantitative not qualitative and it categorises the respondents into social classes AB, C1, C2DE. Since the 1980's, market researchers have developed new categories which rely less on occupation for their definitions. But this is the only data available and Bocoock suggests that these changes in modern market research in part reflect a recognition of changes that have taken place in consumption patterns and in the nature of consuming groups. He states that at the time of this research '... patterns of consumption, in Britain particularly, ... tended to follow the well-established social status group and economic class categories ...'(Bocoock 1993: 26).

The summary of the Gallup report highlighted a number of trends, among them it stated that, 'the class of visitor is high and is still going up slightly'. The stack chart, Figure 4, created from the Gallup figures, shows that those in class C1 considerably exceeded the national proportion, while those in categories C2DE were less than the national average. The market researchers noted that the class profile of those attending the Exhibition in 1961 was 'almost identical to that of the readership of the *Daily Mail* itself' (AN Survey Report 1961: sheet 4). There was no attempt to examine whether this was because the Exhibition was more or less exclusively promoted through the *Daily Mail*, or because it most accurately represented the interests of that section of the population at the time. What the chart also shows is that those in classes AB were substantially under represented. This appears to support Lewis' comments and the concerns that he expressed about the absence of the 'intelligent public' from the Exhibition. Although the AB's were under represented, the predominance of C1's enabled the researchers to comment that, 'It will be seen that this class profile is significantly higher than is found in the country as a whole, which reflects the visitors' ability to buy goods which are exhibited - another "bull" point for the Exhibition' (AN Survey Report 1961: sheet 4). This quotation is evidence of the importance to the writer of the report of the commercial potential of the Exhibition. Lewis' report discussed in the previous chapter makes it clear that this interest was shared by the management of the Exhibition.

Although the later market research reports conducted by NOP in the 1970's referred to the class profile of visitors, they did no more than say that the profile had remained the same as previous years. They did not provide figures or percentages until the 1976 report. This showed that the percentage in classes AB had doubled to 20%, with class C1 increasing by 7% to 40%. For the first time there was a break down of the C2DE's showing that 25% of those attending in 1976 were C2 and 13% DE, a slight increase from the 9% for this group that had characterised the earlier years of the decade. Thus, although there was a decline in

the total numbers attending the Exhibition from the period examined here, this was accompanied by a shift that constituted a rise in the social status of those attending.

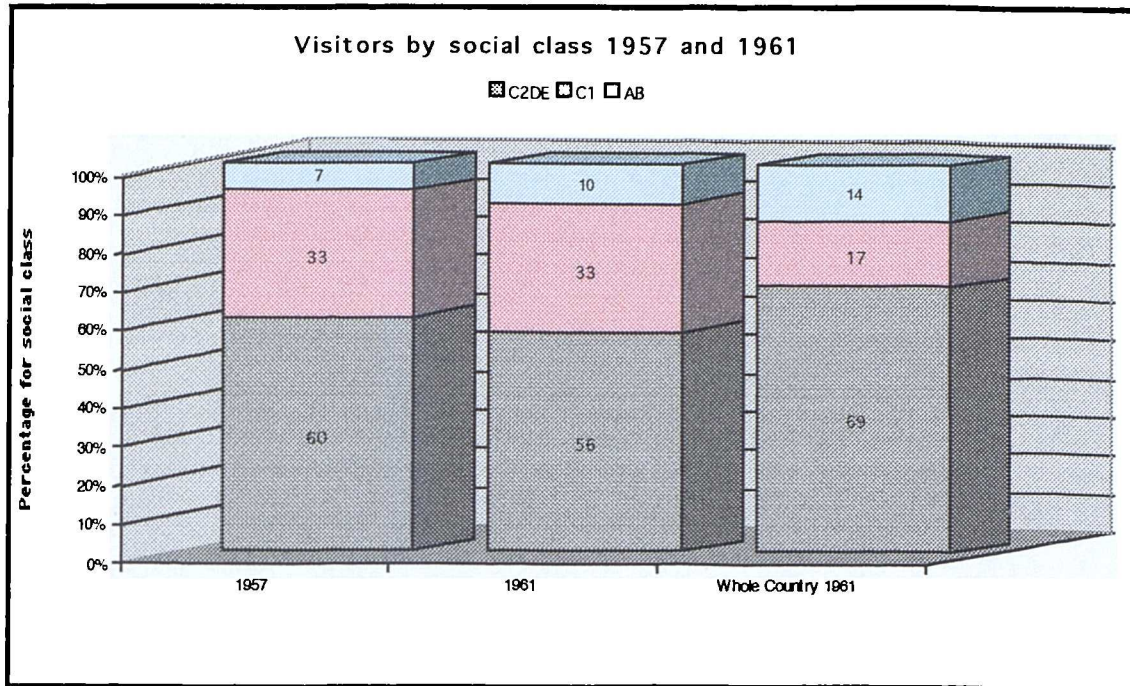


Figure 4: This chart shows a far greater representation of C1's and an under representation of AB's compared with the national profile of the same period. (Chart compiled from data given in the 1961 AN Research Survey Report.)

Another aspect of attendance at the Exhibition about which Lewis, and therefore the organisers, had no information were questions regarding the age or sex, or equally importantly, the number people coming as couples who attended the Exhibition. Figure 5 shows the results of all the market research reports available giving a break down of the attendance of women and men at the Exhibition. It can be seen immediately that the attendance of women was consistently much higher than that of men. In 1957 62% were women and 38% men, in 1961 the gap narrowed a little with 58% of visitors being women and 42% men. The 1970 and 1972 figures are quoted in the 1973 report and they show that after the widening of the gap in 1970 it came nearest to parity in 1972 with a ratio of 53% to 47%. The interesting thing about this graph is its comparison with that of attendance by age, Figure 6, below. There is quite a significant change of age distribution in the early Seventies. The report on the 1961 figures drew attention to the fact that the age of those

attending the Exhibition appeared to be increasing<sup>3</sup>. One reason for this given by the researchers was the significant proportion of people coming to the Exhibition regularly each year, who were naturally increasing in age with each year of the Exhibition. This observation led to the point being made in the report that there was a need to do something to attract younger visitors saying: 'The profile of the visitors is getting middle aged and it appears that the Exhibition is less popular with people under 34. There is clearly a need to make the Exhibition attractive to young people' (AN Survey Report 1961: sheet 1).

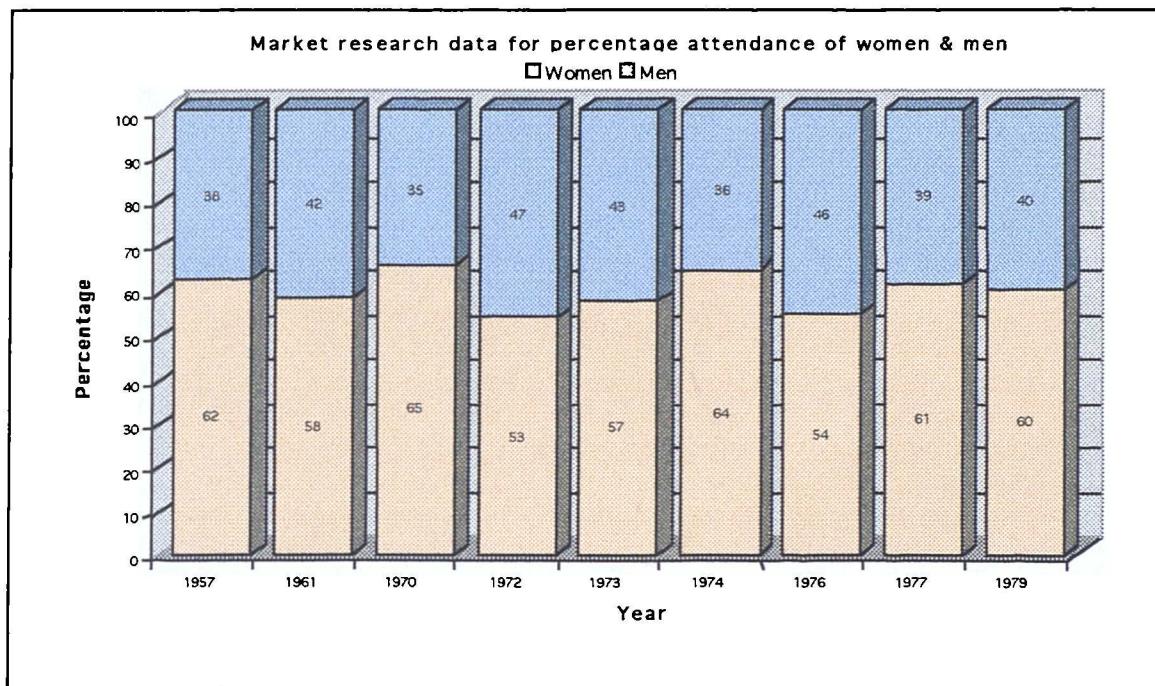


Figure 5: The attendance of women at the Exhibition stayed permanently above that of men. (Chart compiled from data given in the 1961 AN Research Survey Report and NOP Market Research Reports 1973, '74, '76, '79.)

Returning to the subject of the greater attendance of women in proportion to men Michael Carter, who had worked for organisers of the Exhibition from 1967 to 1991 and who had previously been associated with the industry for many years, said in an interview that there was a 'family tradition' of attendance at the show and that 'mother would take daughter'.

<sup>3</sup> It should be noted that the figures for 1957 and 1961 were more detailed than those of later reports, breaking the age groups down into five, rather than three, groups. This showed that people in their late teens and early twenties attended to a far lesser extent than those in their mid twenties and early thirties.

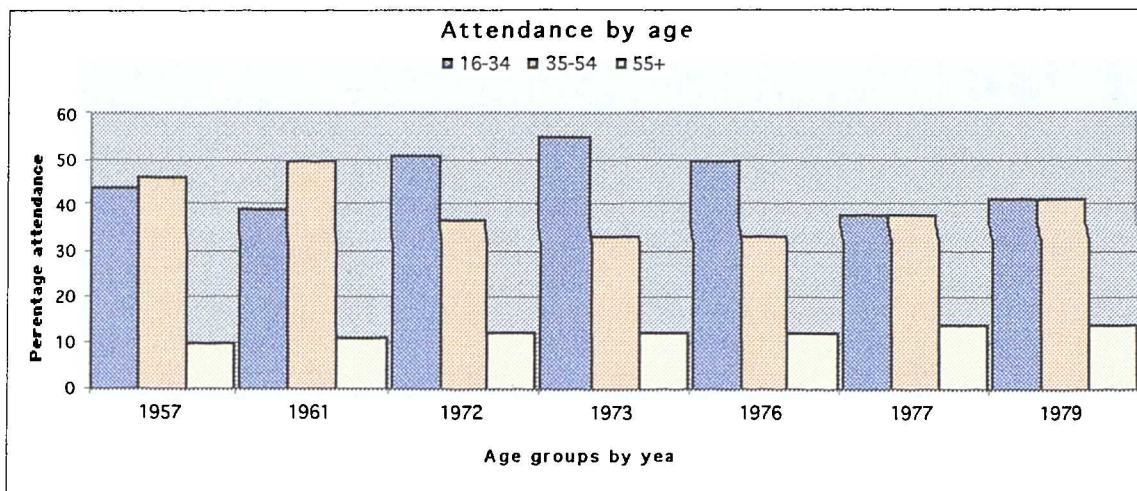


Figure 6: The 1961 market research report drew attention to the need to attract visitors of a younger age. The later decline in attendance of this group may reflect the national trend for marriage to take place at a later age. (Chart compiled from data given in the 1961 AN Research Survey Report and NOP Market Research Reports 1973, '74, '76, '79.)

The market research report of 1961 also suggests that women were responsible for taking their husbands. The front page summary of the main findings states that 'Housewives are now bringing their husbands with them to the Exhibition to a far greater extent - 84% of visitors are married couples' (AN Survey Report 1961: sheet 1). Unfortunately the report does not give any further detailed statistical information on the attendance of couples at the Exhibition. The figure of 84% of all visitors being married couples does seem very high, given that the same report says that 42% of visitors were men. But it is clear from elsewhere in the 1961 report that this was viewed as an important finding:

This tendency for the Exhibition to become a joint husband and wife venture is most important, especially for the sale of household goods which, being expensive, almost always require joint decisions. Women should obviously be encouraged to bring along their husbands and this is clearly a bull point for the Exhibition (AN Survey Report 1961: sheet 2).

Again this quotation indicates the importance that the commercial implications revealed by the market research data had for the author of the 1961 report. The phrase 'bull point', previously referred to in relation to the class of visitor and their ability to make purchases, is only to be found in the 1961 report. In general, this report is slightly different in tone from those conducted later by outside market research companies, and it went on to suggest that the Exhibition 'requires' 'some sort of honeymoon or setting up home feature' to attract

younger visitors (*AN Survey Report 1961: sheet 3*). This again suggests attention was focused on the commercial nature of the Exhibition as a major sales point. The role of visitors as potential customers being related in this report both to class position and to the marital status of couples.

One further finding of the 1961 report that relates to the commercial role of the Exhibition is given in the summary of the main findings on the first page of the report. It states: 'There is a significant increase in interest in labour-saving domestic equipment and a decline in interest in the houses', this can be seen in Figure 7 (*AN Survey Report 1961: sheet 1*). The houses dropped from 16% to 11% in popularity and the labour-saving items rose from 7% to 15%. Because the interest is spread over a number of different sections none was given a particularly high percentage. Of those questioned, just over 70% said they had found an exhibit or stand which they thought particularly good or interesting - some of those questioned mentioned more than one item. Later reports did not give the detailed percentage breakdown of items that interested visitors in the way that the 1961 report did. The later reports did however comment on 'Sections and Stands Visited' in a general verbal way. The 1973 report for example noted; 'As in previous years the most popular sections of the Exhibition were "Domestic Equipment", "Furnishing and Decoration" and "Food and Cookery"' which were all visited by around three-quarters of the visitors. There is no reference to the houses in these later reports and the impression is that interest had moved away from the house itself to the domestic nature and requirements of the home. These later reports give a brief examination of reasons for visiting the Exhibition. The most popular reason in the early 1970's was 'to see new developments for the home'. Later reports do not provide a direct comparison with this but instead look at whether people came to see something particular like furniture of kitchen equipment.

Viewed overall, the 1961 report was quite self congratulatory. It emphasised the plus points but it did not stress negative aspects in the data and sometimes ignored it altogether.

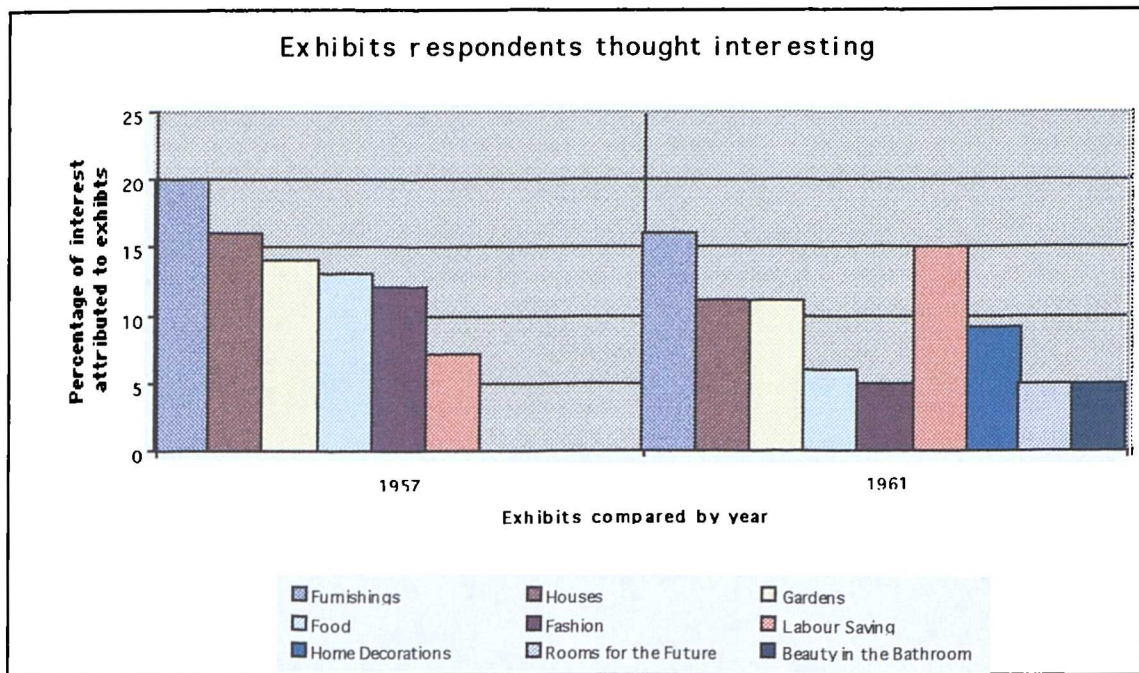


Figure 7: Interest in the show homes, food and fashion drops, but interest in labour-saving items rises considerably. (Chart compiled from data given in the 1961 AN Research Survey Report.)

For example, the report stated that the 1961 Exhibition was ‘a great success’ with 40% of visitors saying that the Exhibition was better than the previous one, whereas only 29% had done so in 1957. However over a fifth of those attending thought the Exhibition was not as good as the previous year and that is a significant number (AN Survey Report 1961: sheet 6). The report also noted that people were on average spending less time at the Exhibition, with a reduction from five hours to three and a half hours from 1957 to 1961. Because there was no evidence of an increase in dissatisfaction with the Exhibition, the report attributed this change to improved circulation and the provision of better maps, as well as possibly reflecting ‘a change of habit’. There is no suggestion that this might warrant further investigation.

The later reports continued to make direct reference to commercial considerations by commenting specifically on ‘Purchases and Orders at the Exhibition’ as a subject heading.

In 1973 it was estimated by the researchers that £7,535,000 was spent on goods ordered at the Exhibition, and £3,057,000 was spent on items actually purchased there, making an overall total of £10,592,000. They noted that care must be taken with respect to this figure given their relatively small sample size (NOP Survey Report 1973: 7). The report for the following year suggests a not dissimilar but nevertheless lower figure of £9,593,000. This may well itself reflect the difficulties that were beginning to be experienced as a result of the OPEC nations increase in the price of oil. Of interest in both these reports was the fact that purchasers were said most likely to be women, people in older age groups, and 'repeat' visitors. These factors were noted as being similar to previous years. While these are figures from a very different economic period from the one with which this thesis is directly concerned, they do give an indication of the economic significance of the Exhibition. Clearly the figures cannot be projected back, *but given that the Exhibitions of the 1950's and early 1960's* achieved a greater attendance, it is reasonable to assume they achieved a similar if not greater turn-over in terms relevant to the period.

With regard to the decline in overall attendance Michael Carter said that the advent of commercial television in September 1955 was 'the great watershed' so far as the Exhibition was concerned in that it changed the situation for big manufacturers like Nestlé or Cross and Blackwell. (Though the impact of commercial television would not have been immediate, because people had not only to buy a new television set, but also had to have a new aerial erected to receive it. This was a considerable expense at the time, and initially companies were reluctant to spend money on advertising because of the small audience.) Once commercial television was established, the impact of it was to reduce the value of the Exhibition to manufacturers significantly. Up until the advent of commercial television, the Exhibition had provided an important opportunity for manufacturers to advertise their products. He said some would take a big stand and give away free samples. Hovis, for example, who ended their association with the Exhibition in 1976, were particularly well known for their miniature loaves. These were a favourite that caught the public imagination. Two further reasons for large companies preferring commercial television rather than the



Exhibition were first, that the audience for the Exhibition was mostly restricted to the Home Counties and, second, that the Exhibition was open for only a few weeks in the Spring.

Michael Carter also considered that developments that brought about changes in the operation of the retail market affected the Exhibition. In the tight economic climate that followed the war, high street traders could not easily afford to buy in new items, nor could they afford to take the risk of stocking new products and lines in case they failed to sell. The *Ideal Home Exhibition* provided a forum that enabled manufacturers to introduce new products to the public, thus creating the demand that enabled high street retailers to order the items with confidence. Michael Carter said that changes in the nature of the retail market continued to the extent that now the Exhibition found itself in competition with D.I.Y warehouses and hypermarkets. A further problem for the Exhibition was what Michael Carter called 'the increasing sophistication' of the visiting public. He said that at one time bringing in people and a display from Kenya would have been a great attraction, now it was of much reduced interest. He attributed this to the effect of television and the vastly increased amount of foreign travel which has meant that what was once exotic and new is now relatively commonplace. The decline in the status of the Exhibition had consequences for the content of the Exhibition itself. Michael Carter said. 'We used to have national stands, for example Australia, now we have to appeal to commercial organisations, who look at things differently.' He also explained how in earlier times if an actor was asked to make an appearance at the Exhibition it would be of benefit to his or her career, now the organisers had to pay for them to make the appearance. Michael Carter said that the consequence of these changes was that in 1990 the attendance was around 600,000 with an Exhibition extended over more days than the Golden Jubilee, which achieved more than twice that number of visitors.

The evidence provided by Michael Carter indicates that, before the rise of commercial television, the Exhibition played an important role for manufacturers and for shop keepers in informing and educating the consuming public. It gave traders the confidence to stock new

lines and provided manufacturers with an important opportunity to advertise their products with the Exhibition acting as a showcase at which they could be launched. The most successful period in its life coincided with a significant rise in domestic consumption in Britain. According to Catherine Schenk:

Industrial production increased dramatically from 1953 to 1955 as did GDP. Ensuring that the full employment target was met. A striking aspect ... is the dramatic increase in expenditure on consumer durables and other consumption in the boom years 1953-55. The British people finally seemed to be rewarded for their earlier sacrifice as the era of mass consumption arrived. Table 17.7 (printed in this thesis as Figures 8-10 below) shows some components of consumption of consumer durables. New items such as television sets were to transform the quality of life of the average British household (Schenk in Johnson ed. 1994: 316).

The graphs in Figures 8 to 10 show how the most successful period in the life of the *Ideal Home Exhibition* coincided with the rapid increase in the consumption of consumer goods. An increase that also relates to the increased interest in the labour-saving section of the Exhibition at the end of the decade. Howlett says the period 1955-1973 was a 'Golden Age' so far as British economic prosperity was concerned: unemployment remained low; wages rose for both men and women; and the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) grew steadily. Between 1951 and 1973 the annualised growth rate of 2.4 per cent in terms of GDP per head of the population was a third higher than the interwar rate and double that of the pre-1914 rate (Howlett in Johnson ed. 1994: 320). Howlett states that:

The most obvious signs of this increased affluence were the ownership of homes and consumer durables. In 1950 less than three in ten households owned their own home but in 1973 more than half did and car ownership had risen dramatically from 46 cars per thousand head of population to 247. Within the home the ownership of a whole range of domestic appliances increased in this period: the percentage of households owning washing machines increased from 7.5 per cent to 66.9 per cent; the percentage owning refrigerators increased from 3.2 percent to 68 per cent. In 1950 only about one household in every fifty owned a television set but in 1973 more than 90 per cent had one. These changes in the ownership of consumer goods understate the improvement in living standards because the quality of the goods had also increased (Howlett in Johnson ed. 1994: 321).

Thus the period under discussion was not just one when excellent economic conditions prevailed, it was one in which people used their increased wealth to purchase homes and items for the home. The postwar *Ideal Home Exhibitions* took place at a time when both the

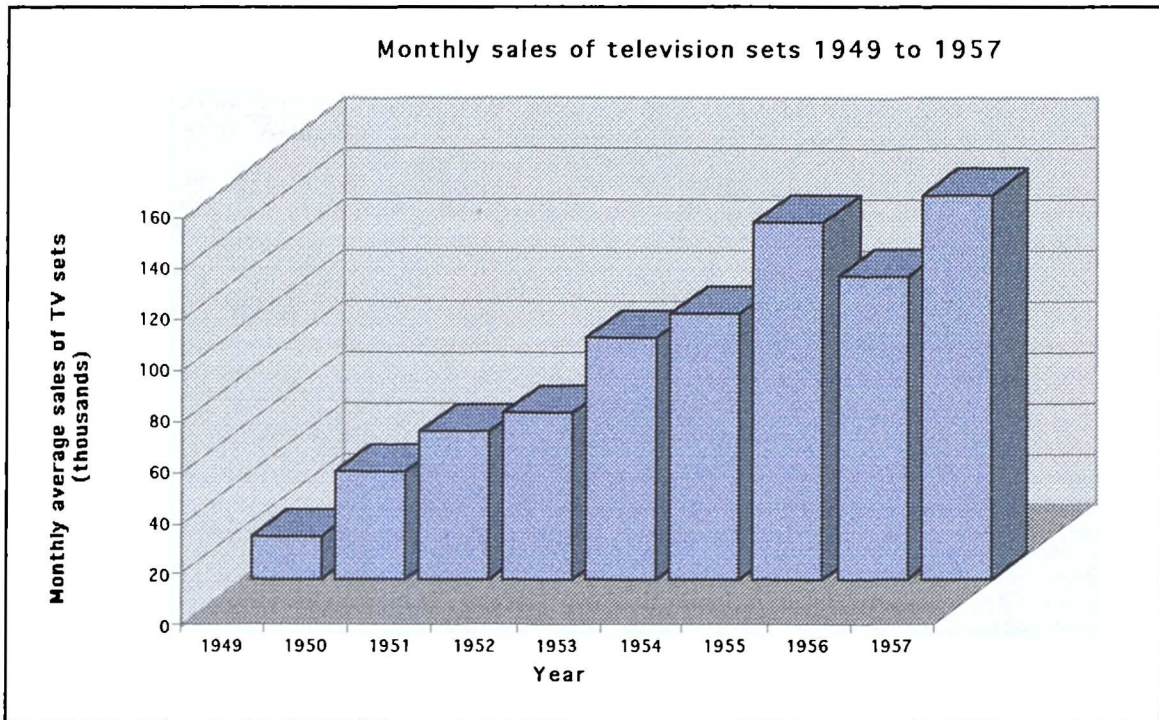


Figure 8: Television sets as an example of the increased purchase of consumer durables in the fifties. The Coronation in 1953 was particularly important for the increase in television sales. (Chart compiled from data given by Schenk in Johnson ed. 1994: 316.)

depleted housing stock, caused by the war, brought the issue of home building to the fore; and when the postwar economic boom enabled an expansion in the consumption of consumer durables. Furthermore, Howlett's final point, that the quality of goods increased, meant that there was an further incentive to replace items in order to benefit from these improvements. The improvements in the quality of consumer durables also enabled the Exhibition's displays to be representations of an ideal of improved standards. The Lewis Report discussed in the previous chapter revealed omissions in the business management of the Exhibition, such as the system of accounting that made it impossible to show the overall profitability of the Exhibition. Equally it would appear that the management knew little about the 'audience' of the Exhibition beyond the overall figures of attendance. With the Exhibition viewed as an advertisement for the *Daily Mail*, and the show itself running successfully so far as attendances were concerned, there was, perhaps, little inducement to explore the issue. The attendance figures show that the Exhibition achieved a sustained degree of popularity for two decades following its reopening after the war, with the 1957 Exhibition representing the high point. The two market research studies undertaken during

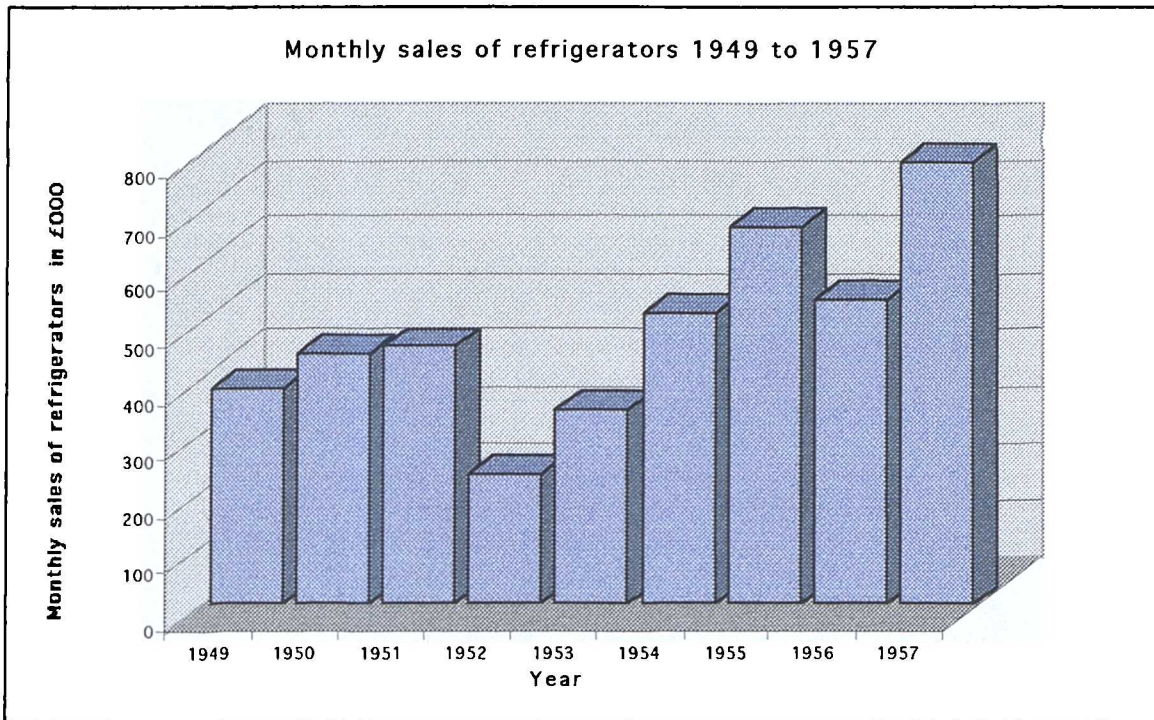


Figure 9: The purchase of Refrigerators shows a similar increase to the consumer durables in the other graphs. (Chart compiled from data given by Schenk in Johnson ed. 1994:316.)

the period being considered here show that the Exhibition attracted an audience similar in social class to the readership of the *Daily Mail*. Compared with the country as a whole social classes A and B were under represented at the Exhibition. In contrast with this, those belonging to social class C1 came to Exhibition in a proportion that was significantly greater than the national one, a fact that was commented on by the market researcher reports as being commercially significant as these visitors could afford to make purchases. Although women came in a greater number than men, a large number of those who came were married couples. Again this was perceived to be economically important for the Exhibition because of joint decision making about expenditure. The market research reports reflect the importance placed on this commercial aspect of the Exhibition. The later market research shows that substantial sales activity took place at the Exhibition, and in all likelihood a comparable pattern obtained when the Exhibition was attracting its largest attendances during the later half of the nineteen-fifties. The record levels of attendance coincided with the period when the purchase of consumer durables increased significantly. If, prior to the advent of commercial television and the development of high street retailing, the Exhibition

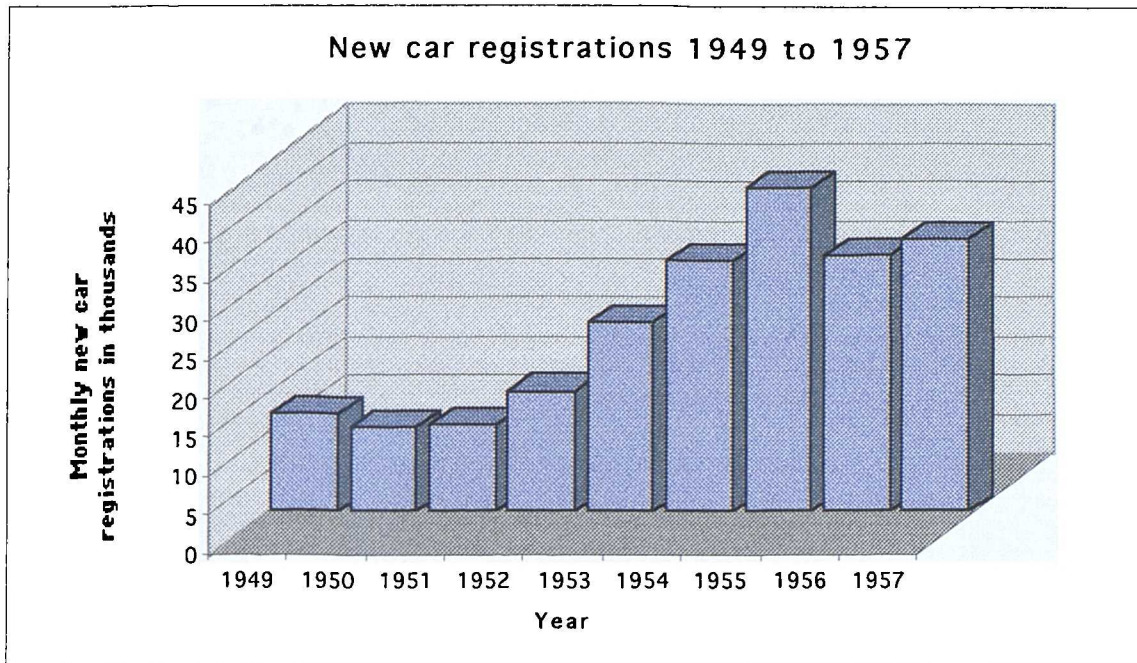


Figure 10: The sale of cars like other consumer items declines during 1956 because of the problems associated with the 'Suez Crisis'. (Chart compiled from data given by Schenk in Johnson ed. 1994: 316.)

provided the manufacturers of items for domestic consumption with an important opportunity to launch new items and products, then it also provided the consuming public with an opportunity to see the latest developments of goods for the home, which the Exhibition represented to them as the ideal.

While the CoID exhibitions sought to address their audiences with educative messages about ideals of 'good design', the evidence of the Ideal Home Exhibition's market research survey reports is that a prime concern was with the audience as potential consumers. The market research reports were commercial reports, whose findings were aimed at improving the Exhibition's commercial appeal. It is this economic concern that underlies the way the Exhibition functioned as an ideological apparatus in the way that it addressed its audience through its representations. It is with a discussion of this address that this thesis now continues.

## **PART TWO: THE IDEOLOGICAL REPRESENTATIONS OF THE EXHIBITION**

### **THE VILLAGE OF IDEAL HOMES AND REPRESENTATIONS OF THE IDEAL HOME**

#### **CHAPTER FIVE**

##### **The Village of Ideal Homes and Postwar Reconstruction**

This part of the thesis is concerned with the material representations of the 'ideal home' made by the Exhibition, particularly through the feature of the show known as the 'Village of Ideal Homes'. This chapter outlines the development of the 'Village of Ideal Homes' in the Exhibition, and then proceeds to examine the representations made during the period of postwar reconstruction under the Labour Government, showing how these representations were constrained both by the difficulties of the immediate postwar period and by the political objectives of the Labour Government in terms of housing.

The first part of the thesis set out to establish the main factors that determined both the form of the Exhibition and the ideas of home to which it gave representation. These constitute the essential context for examining the representations made in the 'Village of Ideal Homes'. The comparison between the *Ideal Home Exhibition* and the approach adopted by the CoID towards its exhibitions revealed distinct differences. The CoID acted as an arbiter of taste. It selected products of which it approved and presented them in a way that was intentionally didactic. It was a design led approach aimed at educating the consumer as part of a strategy to improve the standard of industrial design. The CoID functioned within the Government's objective of raising the standard of British goods available for the competitive export market. In contrast, Cecil Lewis' Report confirmed that the way the *Ideal Home Exhibition* was constituted prevented it from exercising any such selective criteria as it was effectively beholden to its exhibitors - even those responsible for poor design - for the exhibits in the show. Furthermore, because the Exhibition originated as a publicity event for the *Daily Mail* newspaper, it was not instituted in a way that made it properly capable of establishing a set of analytic criteria regarding ideals of home. The management board of the

newspaper, who were the ultimate decisions makers, lacked the essential expertise, and were in many ways reliant upon the manufacturers and exhibitors for the ideals represented in the show. The Exhibition did not have a philosophy or a point of view in the way that the CoID exhibitions did, it was essentially a market and was therefore concerned with representations of home that were for the most part concerned with consumption and that reflected popular ideologies.

So far as these popular ideas of home were concerned, the consequences and experiences of the Second World War brought to the fore widespread discussion and reflection about ideals of housing and homes, both in the population at large and among experts. The first part of this thesis showed that according to the opinions canvassed by a number of bodies, the housing ideals to which the vast majority of people aspired during the war were for a conventionally designed family house of adequate size with improved internal layout and provision of services.

This view was certainly included in the evidence received by the Dudley Committee and was promoted by the *Daily Mail* through its publication of Pleydell-Bouverie's book. For the most part the committee's 'official ideals' were expressed as space standards together with recommendations for redesigning and improvement in the layout of such areas as those devoted to the preparation and consumption of food and tasks like laundering. However, because of the densities required by postwar redevelopment plans the Committee did not rule out, but rather incorporated, flats into their recommendations. Flats were clearly not in accord with widely expressed popular opinion and were not part of the popular 'ideal', but not only were they an important part of later re-housing programmes, they were commercially important to at least two of the construction companies who exhibited in the 'Village of Ideal Homes'. Thus the ideals reflected in the 'Village of Ideal Homes' in the postwar period represent a negotiation between: Government housing controls, regulations, and policies - particularly during the period of reconstruction; popular aspirations regarding house and home; the commercial response of builders to these aspirations and Government

policies, and the builders' own objectives as exhibitors; set in the context of the traditions of the 'Village' as they had developed over the years of the Exhibition.

'The Village of Ideal Homes' consisted of several completely built and fully furnished dwellings. It developed into one of the main features of the *Ideal Home Exhibition* that in many ways epitomised the Exhibition, and constituted one of its most popular annual attractions. Not only were these show homes excellent advertisements for the various building and construction companies that provided them as exhibits, they provided ideal showcases for all the many items of furniture, decoration, and appliances with which they were equipped. Though the 'Village' was an established feature long before the period under examination, the show did not feature this item at the beginning; it evolved as the show developed into a regular event. In the very earliest Exhibitions the buildings were not advertising exhibits for commercial builders but features that provided entertainment and interest as Exhibition displays. For example the second Exhibition held in 1910 exhibited a Tudor village. The buildings were not furnished but were used as stands to house the displays of firms like Heal's, Pears, and Crosse & Blackwell. The next Exhibition in 1912 displayed as its centrepiece the winning design of the Ideal Homes competition designed by Reginald Fry. It also featured a main street of a Dutch village, a project that was the creation of the Netherlands Chamber of Commerce. After the First World War 'The Village' rapidly developed to displaying a variety of show homes and began to take the form associated with the Exhibition to this day.

In the interwar period a great number of different houses of different styles were exhibited from bungalows to luxury manor houses. Mostly the houses were of a traditional style utilising, for example, designs based on Tudor or Georgian features. More Modern Movement designs did appear from time to time. In 1930 the show featured 'the house that Jill built'; married women readers of the *Daily Mail* were invited to submit designs in a competition. The winning design was, however, finally drawn up by a male architect and had such modernist features as a flat roof. The following year 'the house that Jack built' was



exhibited and this again had a Modern Movement aesthetic. The Wells Coates' 'Sunspan House' formed part of the 1934 Exhibition which was devoted entirely to designs in the 'International Style'.

In the last Exhibition before the war, Elizabeth Denby designed an exhibit for the 'Village' entitled the 'All-Europe House'. It was of 'the usual subsidy size of 860 square feet' which provided a living-room, a kitchen big enough to eat in, a small downstairs lavatory, three bedrooms, a bathroom and a small garden (Exhibition Catalogue: 1939). Denby said it differed from conventional British houses of the interwar period by being neither detached nor semi-detached but part of a row. She claimed, 'This is a return to a very English way of living which has been neglected lately, but which is becoming increasingly popular on the Continent.' The design was not for a straight terraced row but used a Swedish idea in which each house was placed at an angle to the one next to it. This created privacy and prevented the dwelling being overlooked, for the wall of the adjoining property that formed one boundary of the garden was blank. Though Denby's exhibit was for working people, it was only one exhibit in an Exhibition that displayed ten dwellings ranging across the price spectrum, which was the normal practice for the show. Along with it, at the lower end, were a bungalow and a house that could either be built as semi-detached or terraced: at the other end was a six bedroom house which included a bed-sitting room for the maid. A number of three bedroom houses occupied the price ranges between these exhibits.

During the period with which this thesis is concerned, the 'Village of Ideal Homes' consisted of between four to ten houses or bungalows. For the most part they represented the most up-to-date dwellings available to the public. Immediately after the Second World War, Government regulations strictly controlled all forms of building, but after restrictions were lifted the exhibits represented a wide price band of dwellings offered by commercial firms. In addition to exhibits of houses, bungalows, and occasionally flats, there have also been buildings provided as educational exhibits, these have either been instructional items or

examples of special forms of housing provisions such as flats for old people. On other occasions some of the show homes have been unusual items or items of special interest, to add to the general appeal of the Exhibition as an entertainment rather than as examples of potential dwellings. Examples of this are the 'Roof House' and the 'Round House' both exhibited in 1958. They were not shown as potential dwellings, but as displays to interest and to entertain. The 'Roof House' was from Germany, designed and built by industrialist Dr. Johann Ludowici for impecunious young German couples, and could be built in two stages. First the high sloping roof section would be constructed. This provided six small rooms that could be lived in until more money was available to purchase the ground floor. When the ground floor was in situ, hydraulic lifts were used to place the roof section on top of it. The rooms could then be rearranged to form the conventional plan of bedrooms upstairs and living rooms downstairs. This lifting process was featured at the Exhibition. Visitors were able to inspect the roof section as an independent dwelling on the ground, and then see it lifted onto the ground floor section. They were then able to visit the newly completed unit. The organisers had seen this as a 'fun' item and had shown it for its interest value. They were, however, taken aback by the way they were inundated with enquiries from interested purchasers who saw this as a feasible way of owning a home of their own. The 'Round House' was a spherical structure that could be slung below a helicopter, and was developed for use in the Congo<sup>1</sup>. As part of the publicity for the Exhibition it was towed up the Thames towards Olympia. The buildings exhibited at the show may thus be classified into three main groups: representative dwellings; educational exhibits; and entertainment/interest exhibits. However, the first category represents by far the largest proportion of building shown at the Exhibition. The houses which represented the dwellings in which the show's visitors might live, or in which they might aspire to live, were the main form of exhibit, and indeed in most years they were the only form of dwelling exhibited.

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<sup>1</sup> The Catalogue 'Village' preview description contradicts the individual description of this exhibit. It suggests the 'Round House' was designed at the request of the Greek Government as a safe dwelling against lava flow.

The popularity of 'The Village of Ideal Homes' as an attraction at the Exhibition was evidenced by the queues of people who would wait in order to be able to see round them. In the Catalogue the 'Village' was the subject of a feature article and there were individual descriptive entries for each house. Between the years 1947 and 1962 a total of one hundred and six houses of different types were displayed. Sixty-five were exhibited in the first ten years of Exhibitions following the war, and forty-one in the next five years<sup>2</sup>. The Exhibition Catalogues of this latter period give the impression of a significant increase in prosperity compared with the period of postwar shortages. This is reflected in an increasing grandeur in the scale of the show. Not only did the forms of presentation become more elaborate, there was also an increase in the number of houses exhibited.

In the period under consideration, two firms, E. & L. Berg Ltd. and Davis Estates Ltd. exhibited every year. Unity Structures Ltd. exhibited on most occasions, and J. Laing & Son Ltd. were also frequently represented in the first seven years, nearly always in association with a Government Ministry project. Crouch, who had exhibited before the war, had an exhibit for the last seven years of the period. Other firms exhibited more occasionally. The largest number of houses, ten, were shown in 1962 and the fewest, four, in 1954. In most years one or more of the homes was specially furnished by an individual or organisation. A special feature was made of this in 1951 to coincide with the centenary of the Great Exhibition. On this occasion all of the homes were specially furnished, mostly by feature writers of the *Daily Mail*. The CoID was involved about every other year in exhibits associated with Government departments, advising on the furnishing of exhibits that were either direct Ministry projects or were housing displays aimed at local authorities.

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<sup>2</sup> See also Figure 11 page 215 for the number of houses exhibited each year.

Even though the 'Village' was constructed of actual buildings, the show homes and other exhibits, like the furnished rooms or kitchens, were not 'real' homes, but were representations of the home. They were 'ideal' homes in two senses: first, in the sense used in the Exhibition title, that they embodied peoples' ideals about the material home they might like; and, second, in the sense that together the show homes constitute a series of representations or *ideas* of what 'home' means. Furthermore, the Exhibition not only registered the interplay of ideas and issues related to the home, it also saw itself as an intervention into them. From the beginning the Exhibition set out not only to display different designs, the selection of which is an aspect of this intervention in itself, but consciously portrayed itself as influencing and educating its visitors. Thus the Catalogues suggest that:

It can fairly be claimed that the Daily Mail Ideal Home Exhibition has exercised a most powerful influence upon the national standards of taste and utility as regards residential architecture, interior decoration, furnishing, household appliances and even the laying out of private gardens (Exhibition Catalogue 1958: 61).

While the Exhibition may not have promoted the 'good design' values of the design establishment but affirmed popular values, there is no question but that it had a 'powerful influence' through its attraction of a mass audience at an important stage in the development of the postwar home.

The first postwar Exhibition in 1947 was held at a time of major difficulty in the life of the nation, when a prolonged period of abnormally bad weather exacerbated the fuel shortages occasioned by the war. This resulted in a national crisis which intensified the difficulties under which the Exhibition organisers laboured. By 7 January the *Daily Mail* was referring the cold as the cause of the 'unprecedented fuel crisis' facing industry. Not only were fuel stocks at the power stations low, but by 11 February nearly 40,000 fuel laden wagons were frozen immovable in the colliery sidings of the North Eastern area alone. The population had to cope with the blizzard conditions of the coldest February of the twentieth century with heating and lighting restrictions in the home through hours of enforced power

cuts and blackouts. Towards the end of the month working hours were staggered to introduce night shifts as a strategy to even out fuel consumption. Conditions still did not ease until March. Not only did this winter have an immediate impact on the living conditions of the population and a detrimental impact on industrial productivity and the national economic situation, along with the further cold winters that followed, I believe it also had an impact on attitudes towards heating and warmth in the home. Preparations for the Exhibition were made in temperatures that were rarely above freezing even with braziers burning inside the hall. The organisers had to conduct continuous negotiations with the Board of Trade, the Ministry of Supply, and the Ministry of Fuel, to ensure that they complied with the regulations imposed by the Government departments<sup>3</sup>.

Instead of the pre-war sumptuous forms of display, the decorations of the Exhibition consisted mainly of spring flowers. The 'Village of Ideal Homes' was called '*The Village of Beginning Again*'. Six show homes were exhibited, all of them prefabricated. The Catalogue commented:

For the first time in the history of this exhibition, we have a village built on principles in which the brick layer and the man who carries the hod have no part. It marks an unusual and passing epoch in the history of house building - the period when we had to erect with haste and no waste either of time or materials (Exhibition Catalogue 1947: 77).

By the time the war ended the housing situation was dire. The fact that 475,000 houses had been either totally destroyed or rendered no longer suitable for habitation has already been mentioned. In addition to the destroyed houses, a further three million were also estimated to have been damaged<sup>4</sup>. The shortages of wartime destruction were further compounded by the fact that there had been almost no building during the six years of the war. There were therefore effectively a further 700,000 fewer houses. Of the existing

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<sup>3</sup> Exhibition Catalogue 1948: 24.

<sup>4</sup> Malpass and Murie 1990: 61.

accommodation many had no choice but to go on living in houses that were already condemned or due to be condemned as unfit in 1939<sup>5</sup>. The demand on the depleted housing stock was further subject to new demographic pressures. Two million marriages had taken place and from 1941 there was an increase in the birth rate peaking in the 'Baby Boom' of 1947. By the time the Labour Government came to power in 1945 it was faced with a population that had grown by one million, and a building industry short not only of materials but also of skilled labour such that Marwick describes it as being in 'disarray' (Marwick 1996: 55). One consequence of the shortage of housing was that a rash of squatting broke out throughout the country targeting, for example, disused troop billets. The Labour Government, Burnett says:

needed no persuading that it would have to play the major part in promoting new homes at a time of urgent national need: the Government's dilemma was not the will, but the means, to do so when faced with the competing claims of industrial reconstruction, nationalization and the welfare state programmes, and with the problems caused by the balance of payments and shortages of materials (Burnett 1986: 286).

When the first postwar *Ideal Home Exhibition* opened, the Labour Government's programme of reconstruction was already under way. Its policies and strategies as well as the consequences of the war were determinant of the representations made in the Exhibition's 'Village of Ideal Homes'. For example, because the emphasis of the Government's approach was on the provision of housing by the state, the issuing of licences was used to control the proportion of public provision to private building to a ratio of four to one. In other words, eighty per cent of building was for public provision. Aneurin Bevan, as Minister for Health, had housing as part of his responsibility. (He was, however, also more than occupied with the introduction of the National Health Service and, in retrospect, the failure of Attlee to appoint a separate minister responsible for housing has been seen as partly responsible for Labour's failure to build sufficient houses to meet public demand.) Bevan's plans centred on the provision of council houses for the working classes taking as

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<sup>5</sup> Ravetz in Fyrth (ed.) 1995: 147.

his model, the idealised view of the village as an integrated community, where the doctor, the shopkeeper, and the farm labourer all lived in the same street (Hennessy 1993: 163). Nevertheless Malpass and Murie say that these houses benefited mainly the better paid members of the working class (Malpass and Murie 1990: 76). Despite the clamour to build a lot of houses quickly, in an oft quoted remark Bevan stated that, whilst the judgements of the time might be concerned with the quantity of houses built, later judgements would be concerned with the quality. He therefore implemented the recommendations of the Dudley Committee by setting higher standards for fittings and space than ever before meeting, and exceeding, the minimum recommendation of 900 square feet. The 1946 Housing (Financial and Miscellaneous Provisions) Act is judged by Malpass and Murie to be an important, but often overlooked, measure that encouraged local authorities to build to a high standard on a large scale as, in comparison with 1939, it trebled the value of subsidies (Malpass and Murie 1990: 74)<sup>6</sup>. The buildings exhibited in the '*Village of Beginning Again*' represented this situation of postwar urgent necessity to provide accommodation and Government control to achieve its immediate and longer term housing objectives. All the exhibits were of Government sponsored or Government approved types (Exhibition Catalogue 1947: 77). Not only was all building of houses subject to Government regulation, so also were repairs and any construction work on existing houses. An article was published in *House & Gardens* magazine in 1947 advising readers of the restrictions on repairs and construction. Among them were that building work was not to exceed £10 per annum and not more than £2 could be spent on repairs in a month. Any work between £10 and £100 required local authority approval and anything above that had to go the Ministry of Works Regional Licensing Officer. A person was not required to cost their own labour nor that of a third party if the work was done free of charge, so long as they were not members of the building trade. Building materials were also subject to control as they were 'subject to priority

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<sup>6</sup> The Conservatives Government, when it came to power, first increased the subsidy then reduced it once their target had been met.

certificates which are not usually issued for repairs and maintenance. Priority certificates are only issued to provide increased accommodation' (*House & Gardens* Spring 1947: 70). These regulations illustrate a number of issues. First, and most important for the representations made in the show, the degree of Government control over all aspects of building construction relating to the home. Second, the restrictions on home development experienced by those attending the show. Third, why an Exhibition that required scarce building skills and materials had to be in continuous negotiation with Government departments.

The urgent need to provide accommodation combined with the scarcity of both traditional building materials and skilled labour, meant that prefabrication was employed as a solution. Prefabrication was viewed as a new technology. Any doubts raised by prefabrication were not due to innovation, for the war had familiarised people with many technological changes and developments, rather it was the experience of being billeted in the wartime temporary accommodation of barracks and huts. Now that the war was over people wanted, as Pleydell-Bouverie noted, a return to privacy and a 'proper' home. Prefabrication drew on the experience of the American Housing Programme developed from the New Deal, and, as Gaskell notes, the prefabricated houses incorporated the improved space standards recommended by the Dudley Report (Gaskell 1987: 117). Prefabrication took two basic forms, either the house could be completely constructed in the factory ready for assembly on site, or prefabricated units could be made in the factory that could then be assembled in a variety of forms. Both of these were represented in the Exhibition.

The Catalogue descriptions of two of the houses exhibited in 1947 give evidence not only of the use of prefabrication to create houses to solve the housing shortage, but of the need to adapt war based industries to peacetime forms of manufacture. This is an indication of yet a further problem that had to be contended with in the period of reconstruction. The first of these was the 'Aluminium House'. This was developed from the processes previously dedicated to aircraft production. With the scarcity of normal building materials it made use



of the large stocks of light alloy. The 6.5 tons of aluminium used for a Lancaster bomber provided sufficient for nearly three of these houses. The Catalogue states:

‘It is believed that this is the first time in history that houses have been factory-built from start to finish, or delivered on to site complete with all fittings and ready for water, gas and electricity to be connected at once.... Record erection time is 41 minutes complete with all services’ (Exhibition Catalogue 1947: 78).

Although all six of the houses exhibited were of prefabricated construction, the ‘Aluminium House’ was the only temporary building. Bevan was not in favour of the temporary prefabs but he did support prefabrication techniques for permanent housing. Prefabrication techniques were used not only to construct temporary dwellings like the ‘Aluminium House’ but also to construct permanent housing like the other five buildings shown in the Exhibition. The temporary buildings were all offered for rent by local authorities. Of the various different designs proposed for temporary buildings, only four were built in any number, and with 54,500 Aluminium Houses constructed by the end of the programme in 1949 out of a total of 156,623 temporary bungalows, the ‘Aluminium House’ represented the greatest number<sup>7</sup>. 16,604 Aluminium Houses had been erected shortly before the show opened. The construction programme was therefore both well under way and of direct interest to yet many more thousands of people as the remaining 37,896 were due for completion and erection by the end of the year (Exhibition Catalogue 1947: 78). The ‘Aluminium House’ was the most expensive but it was viewed at the time as the ideal of a factory produced house and, according to Vale, it was regarded ‘as the most important phenomenon to emerge from the Temporary Housing Programme’ (Vale 1995: 15). The bungalow was first publicly exhibited at Selfridges in early Summer 1945. It was made in the aircraft factories in four sections, complete with all the internal services and fittings. One of the aspects that distinguished it, and received comment in the architectural press, was the

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<sup>7</sup> The other main buildings to be provided as temporary bungalows were: the Arcon (38,859); the Uni-Seco (28,999) and the Tarran (19,014).

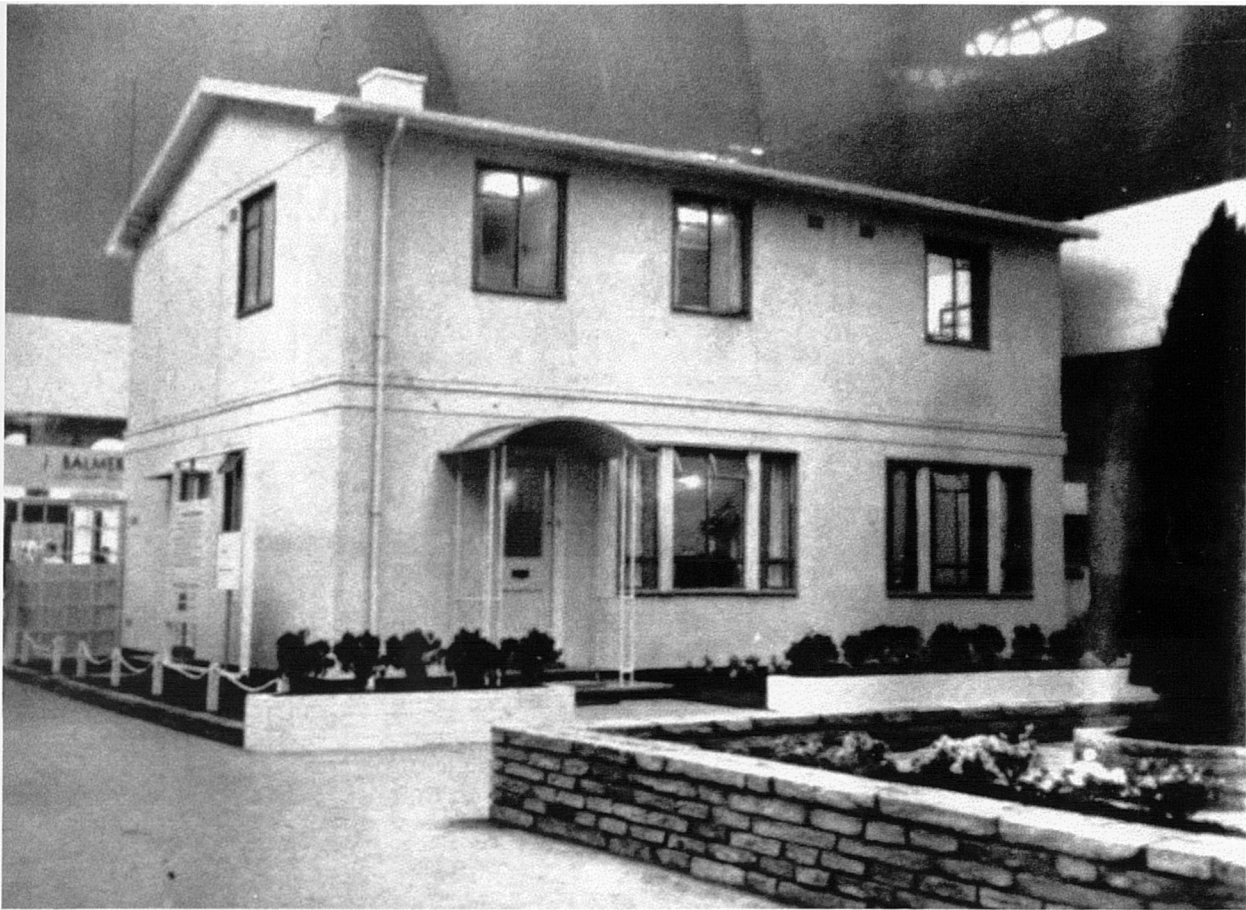
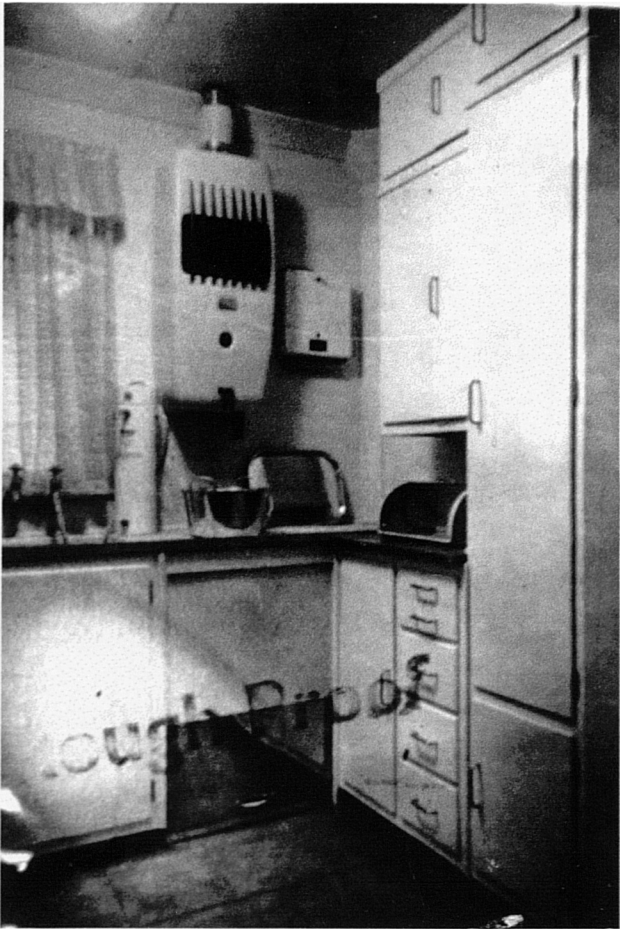


Illustration 1: 1948 Experimental two-story 'Aluminium House'.



Illustrations 2, 3, & 4: The 1947 'Scottwood House'.



Illustration 5: Advertisement for the 1947 'Tarren-Newland House'.

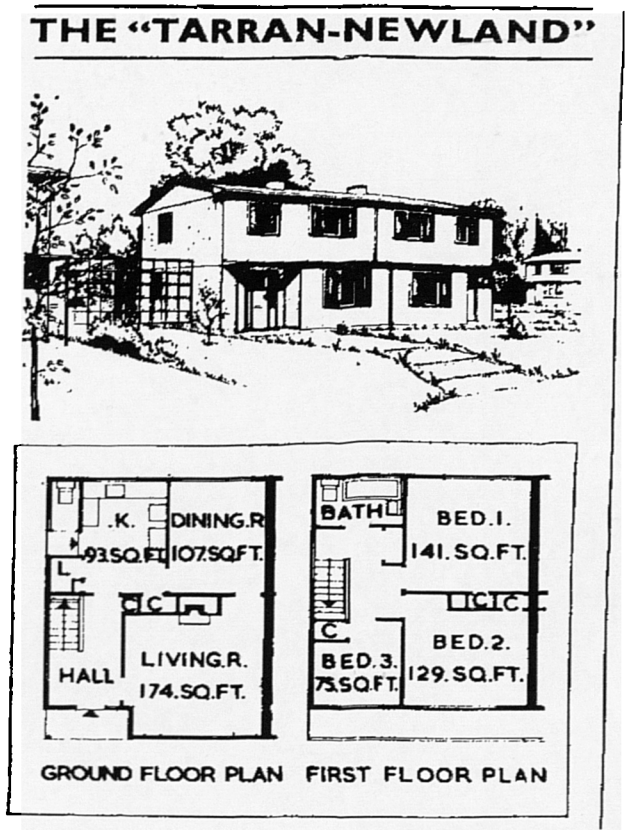
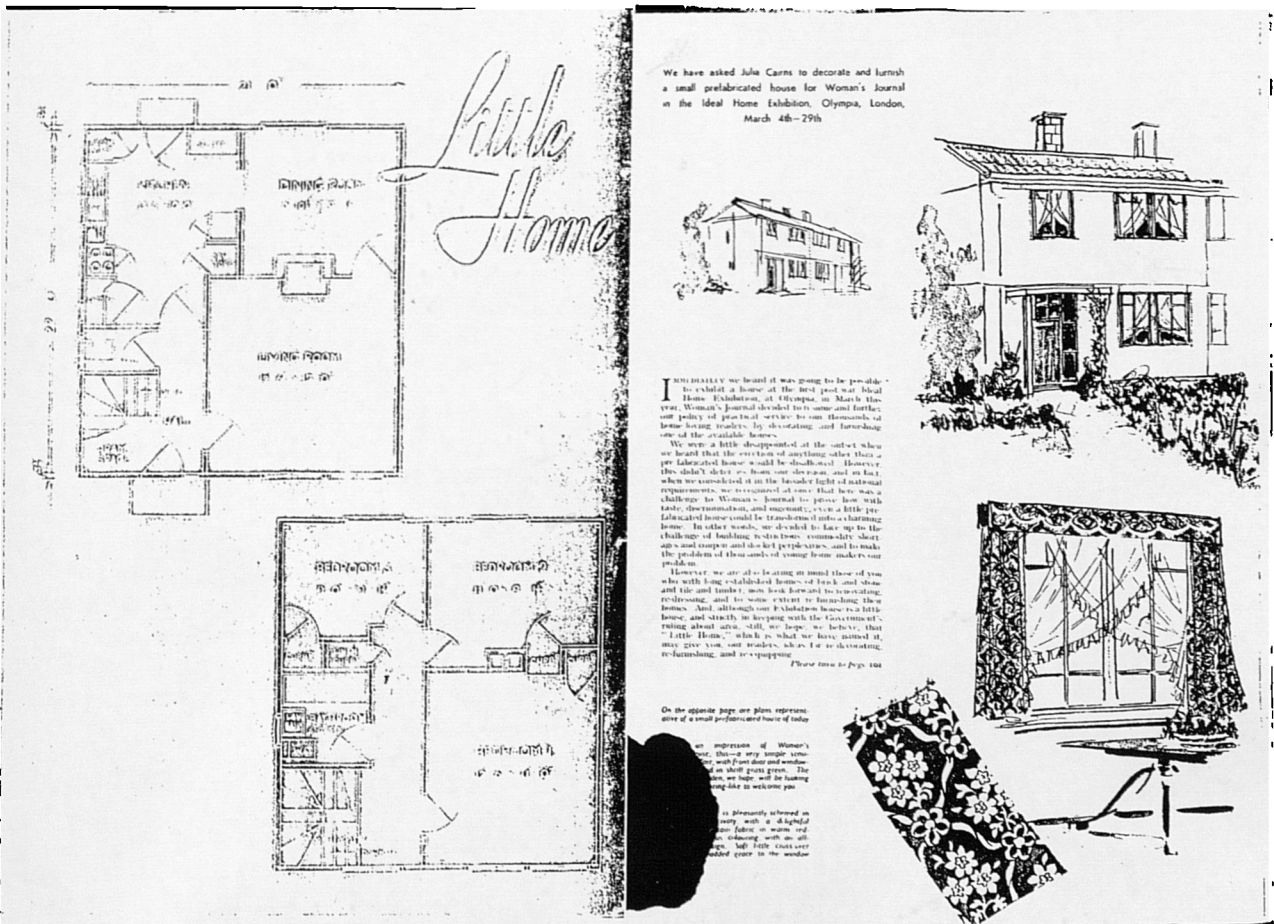


Illustration 6: The Double page spread of Julia Cairns' article for *Woman's Journal* showing not the correct plans for the house furnished by Cairns, but plans of another house.



quality of the work. It was aircraft technicians and workers rather than traditional building labourers who had worked on the prototype with both skill and enthusiasm.

In the following year a two-storey (Illustration 1) version of the 'Aluminium House' was exhibited. It was experimental but again had the advantage that the construction materials were available, and it could be easily transported and erected on a pre-prepared site. One of the problems with the single story temporary prefabricated buildings, as exhibited in the opening Exhibition, is that they only had two bedrooms and such arrangements had long been considered unfit for families. The fact that they were suitable for single people and couples raises the question as to why they were considered temporary, for they were both popular and durable. Vale suggests that the label 'temporary' owed more to Government relations with local authorities, and with the concerns of the building unions than with any inherent shortcomings in the design of construction of the house. In order to achieve the necessary economies of scale central planning and organisation was required. The buildings were ordered by the Government and, virtually unique in the history of housing, remained their property. They were licensed to local authorities on the basis of need, and the local authorities were responsible for providing the sites and infrastructure<sup>8</sup>. The temporary label avoided problems with the sensitivities of local authorities. The situation was similar with the building unions. Before the war there had been 1 million employed in the building industry, this was reduced to 387,000 during the war. The fact that the prefabricated buildings were being factory produced was a source of anxiety to the unions. The label 'temporary' eased the situation in the period of the emergency.

While the 'Aluminium House' was produced by the aircraft industry, the 'Scottwood' factory built permanent house was a product of industries that had been employed by the

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<sup>8</sup> This would have equally applied to the exhibit at the show as all the exhibits were later re-erected to provide accommodation for needy families.

Navy. It represents a second dwelling at the show designed to attempt to adapt war based industries to peacetime needs. The house was designed and built by the British Power Boat Company Ltd. at Southampton (Illustration 2). It was constructed of stressed-skin resin-bonded plywood such as would have been used in the production of the Navy's high speed motor boats, and could be erected in two days. Although factory built mass-production was advocated as a way of achieving economies, with troops being demobilised, and factories and their workers no longer required for the war effort, there was a real concern to create employment and find useful sources of production. Both these points were expressly acknowledged in the Catalogue description of the 'Aluminium House'. The prefabricated houses shown at the Exhibition were therefore not just examples of how the urgently needed housing was to be provided and in what kind of form, they were the products of attempts to maintain employment and develop peacetime industry.

Although the 'Scottwood House' was produced in a boat construction factory it was erected by the building firm Berg who were long associated with the Exhibition. This is an indication of not only how wartime industries were trying to deal with their problems, but also of how building firms were having to cope with the scarcity of labour and materials, and potential competition.

The interior photographs (Illustrations 3 & 4) show a well laid out kitchen appointed with a sink, water heater, cooker, refrigerator and fitted cupboards; meeting many of the ideals articulated by Pleydell-Bouverie and the Dudley Committee. However, the show house appears from the Catalogue to have been furnished by a large number of individual concessionaires so that the appliances depicted may not have been those provided in the actual houses. Although the Catalogue line drawing shows it as a semidetached building, it was exhibited at the show as a single dwelling set in a small garden. It is the garden too that constitutes part of the ideal. As well as the findings of Pleydell-Bouverie and the Dudley Committee regarding the preference for a garden, Vale comments that the majority of rehoused slum dwellers in the interwar years were allocated houses with gardens. This too

helped to create expectations of what postwar slum clearance housing would provide, and the aspirations that developed among those who hoped to be re-housed after the war. Vale suggests that this might help to account for the popularity of prefabs as they were set in the middle of a small garden plot. (Vale 1995: 98). The setting of the various houses at the Exhibition, both temporary and permanent, articulated and reinforced this ideal of an individual house and garden.

While the 'Aluminium House' arrived complete in four sections and the 'Scottwood House' arrived in completed wall sections, an example of the second approach to prefabrication, that of prefabricated components, is provided by the exhibit of Tarran Industries. They made their 'debut at the Ideal Home Exhibition' with the 'Tarran-Newland House'. This house was built of reinforced concrete units for the load bearing walls and steel frames for the floor and roof. The Catalogue entry is unusual in that it supplied a plan of the house and an illustrative line drawing (Illustration 5). It says that the houses were being supplied under the Government Permanent Housing Programme, but that it was hoped that when restrictions were lifted, 'these houses will be on sale to the public.' Whereas some of the other entries were purely utilitarian in their descriptions, perhaps not surprising given that most building was being undertaken for local authorities, there was a commercial advertising tone in such comments as 'the well proportioned elevations agreeably broken in front by the bay window and canopy, coupled with the simple layout, will appeal to the discerning visitor' (Exhibition Catalogue 1947: 86). Tarran was named after its founder Robert G. Tarran, a joiner who established a business after WW1. At some point in the thirties he became interested in prefabrication and formed a second company. Tarran Industries was involved in the Quarry Hill flats project in Leeds although the work, perhaps because of inexperience, became subject to a dispute. They were involved in a number of wartime projects building houses for the Scottish Special Housing Association in Dundee in 1940 and in the production of wartime huts (Vale 1995: 12). The firm was therefore in a good position to develop prefabrication in the postwar rebuilding era. Thus, whilst the exhibit was described as being 'manufactured for the Government's Permanent

Housing Programme', the tone of the Catalogue entry describing the building as, 'a permanent, sound and well-appointed home of pleasing appearance' evidences the aim of the firm to develop its private building business (Exhibition Catalogue 1947: 87).

The builders of the 1947 'Lovell House', who had shown at the Exhibition since 1923, also had a more commercial tone in the copy that described their exhibit. The house was designed to comply with 'standards laid down by Government Departments' but the text also spoke of their display exhibiting the 'essential qualities - architectural design and utility - that their experience ... has proved are valued by a discerning public.' The text concluded by stating:

Government policy does not at present permit the offering, as in the pre-war years, of the services of the Lovell organisation to create ideal homes embodying individual ideas and requirements, but in anticipation of the time when such a course will be possible, a priority register is being compiled and intending owners are invited to obtain and complete a preliminary questionnaire form for inclusion (Exhibition Catalogue 1947: 83).

Another house made of pre-cast concrete panels was that exhibited by Wates. Their Catalogue entry again referred to the speed with which the building could be erected. Ease of construction was important not just to reduce the completion time, but more importantly to reduce the requirement for skilled labour. (Later, in 1954 for example, when the Catalogues contained references to speed of construction, the interest in quick completion was to save on building costs.)

The 'Wates' House' was furnished by Julia Cairns for *Woman's Journal*. Wates had said of it, that although their house used 'non-traditional materials' it was 'pleasantly normal in appearance.' *Woman's Journal* devoted three and a quarter pages to the project (Illustration 6). However, despite the space dedicated to the article, the full page plan and the drawing of the house accompanying the article proved not to be of the actual house in the Exhibition. They were described as 'merely representative of the type of small house that is



being built today.’ It seems probable that this was an indication of the situation of continuing postwar difficulty. If, for no other reason than that this was one of the only homes available, the ‘Wates’ House’ was mediated by the Exhibition as an ideal home, it was not a view expressed in all quarters. Indeed, given the space that was devoted to the article, a striking feature of Cairns’ writing was the language used about the prefabricated house.

We were a little disappointed at the outset when we heard that the erection of anything other than a prefabricated house would be disallowed. However this did not deter us ...

...here was a challenge to *Woman’s Journal* to prove how with taste, discrimination, and ingenuity, even a little prefabricated house could be transformed into a charming home (*Woman’s Journal* March 1947: 11).

....if I may say a word about “pre-fabrication” for already it is, for many people losing the polish of what it should mean and can mean, dimmed by the all-too-frequent, modern day lack of finish (*Woman’s Journal* March 1947: 101).

When I heard the dimensions 21 feet by 10 feet, I dismissed the pretentious “forecourt” from my mind, and ever after have thought of it as a “pocket hankie” garden. Now, “hankies” can be very pretty .... (*Woman’s Journal* March 1947: 102).

Such negative attitudes towards prefabricated houses were later reflected in two entries for Unity Structures in the Catalogues of 1950 and 1951. Although their exhibits were of a system building form of construction, both entries said that one advantage of their building was that ‘the finished appearance gives no hint of prefabrication.’ Cairns’ article also referred to some shops who were disinclined to co-operate because of the smallness of the house. As the Catalogue entry described the house as ‘being of a similar and layout to many hundreds of pre-cast concrete permanent houses now being erected ... for local authorities ...’, the house was likely to have been of Dudley Committee standards. Therefore the attitude of the shops would have applied to any house of local authority dimensions (Exhibition Catalogue 1947: 80).

Cairns began the actual consideration of furnishing the house by discussing the form of heating. It was a smokeless fuel burning grate, which was described as ‘saving much

labour' because it was a clean fuel. There was not much detail about the items of furnishing, but those mentioned included a refrigerator, gas cooker, Ascot water heater, electric sewing machine, Hoover and portable radio. She said:

I shall go all out for floor coverings with as little design as possible, remembering that plain floors, like plain walls do add to apparent size. The same also applies to furnishing fabrics, and I have found that it does pay to search for uncouped fabrics... (*Woman's Journal* 1947: 103).

The demand for utility furniture was described as being considerably in excess of production. The furnishing of the home included second-hand furniture partly in order to have 'higher grade furniture' This was because Cairns understood that part of her task was to provide ideas for those with established homes who wish to re-furnish. It should be noted that second-hand furniture continued to appear in the Exhibition certainly up to 1954. In that year the W.V.S furnished the 'New Life for Older Houses' exhibit with second-hand furniture which they painted and for which they made cushions and covers.

The problems posed by the shortages were discussed in *House & Gardens* magazine in 1947 in an article entitled '*Hitler revives Victoria*' The article stated that much had been said about the return of Victorian styles of interior decoration and the belief that they were once again becoming fashionable. The unnamed author did not agree, but considered it to be the consequence of people having no choice but to purchase second-hand furniture.

Those who dislike and resist all the efforts of modern architects to replace the muddle of the Victorian and Edwardian epochs with simpler and more disciplined forms and arrangements will crave for the return to the ornate at all costs. Many people, however, especially those who admired the recent exhibition of Swedish interiors may for a long time be content with simpler forms and uncrowded rooms until an idiom of genuine contemporary ornament emerges (*House & Gardens* Spring 1947: 23).

The Swedish and Danish exhibitions were also mentioned by Sir Hugh Casson in the same magazine, when he asked how it was possible to get better houses. It was an article that could be considered to argue against the suburban values of the pre-war *Ideal Home Exhibitions*. Good design, he argued, could not be left to builders. Builders, he believed, simply followed public taste. If the public taste preferred 'gimcrack gadgets and flashy

finishes' to imaginative planning and quality of structure, it got what it deserved. Britain, he said, had not:

...acquired that nation-deep feeling for design which seems to permeate every Scandinavian product - whether it be a concert hall or a soup spoon - and which was very evident in the recent Swedish and Danish exhibitions (*House & Gardens* Spring 1947: 27).

Though the Scandinavian exhibitions appear to have made a definite impression on those concerned with design, like Casson and other contributors to *House & Gardens*, so far as the design of houses was concerned, the 1947 Catalogue of the *Ideal Home Exhibition* suggested not so much an alternative set of values as a situation very much determined by Government policy response to the postwar housing situation.

Not only was 1947 the year of the first Exhibition after the war, it was a watershed for the Government. Many of the major changes of Nationalisation and the Welfare State had either been introduced or were in the process of introduction, when the Government was faced with a profound economic crisis. Adelman says, 'After the Summer of 1947, things were never the same for the Labour Party' (Adelman 1994: 46). The appalling winter with which the year began has already been mentioned, one consequence was that by February unemployment had reached two-and-a-half million. The loss of production led to a loss of exports at a time when there was a significant increase in the number of imports from the United States, 'the major supplier of food and raw materials after the war' (Jefferys 1992: 28). Bridging the gap ate rapidly into a substantial loan from America which would have been exhausted by October. The situation had been compounded by the loan agreement forced on the United Kingdom that required sterling to become fully convertible to dollars becoming operative resulting in the outflow of dollars reaching crisis proportions. Measures to control the situation included Dalton's November budget which imposed heavy cuts on imported American goods, controls on Government spending, and reductions in rations. Cripps had become the dominant figure in the crisis and he succeeded Dalton as Chancellor when he was forced to resign. To deal with these critical problems Cripps' first priority was

to increase exports, second to increase capital investment in industry and in his own words, ‘... last are the needs, comforts, and amenities of the family’ (quoted in Adelman 1994: 51). The result was a period of queues, shortages, and further food rationing that has been termed the ‘age of austerity’ and which placed the burden on those attempting to run a home.

Although the economy was beginning to show signs of improvement by March 1948, the Silver Jubilee *Ideal Home Exhibition* opened in this context of continuing difficulty. Hence the organiser Charles Truefitt wrote in the *Daily Mail* that one of the orders that went out when planning the show was that ‘factories were to be combed for articles which would ease the burden of the housewife’ (*Daily Mail* 1948: 2). It is also presumably why, in the hope of increasing exports that, according to the Catalogue Forward, the organisers invited overseas buyers to the show saying, ‘We are proud of the new wares our countrymen have to show, and proud, too, that here visitors from every land can meet and observe, as perhaps nowhere else the zest of British folk planning their way of life and finding ... much that will help enhance our country’s way of life and increase its trade’ (Exhibition Catalogue 1948: 5).

After the prefabricated houses of the 1947 Exhibition, the subsequent Exhibitions gradually showed indications of the return to ‘traditional’ forms of building for individual houses. Although there were negative attitudes to prefabrication, such as those quoted above, it was practical and economic considerations that led to the abandonment of prefabrication. A little later Yorke & Whiting were to comment, ‘...we have now gone back to a more traditional way of building, partly because prefabricated houses were using up material needed elsewhere and partly because the cost proved very high’ (Yorke & Whiting 1954: 12). The 1948 ‘Village of Ideal Homes’ was comprised of six dwellings of four different types. One of the exhibits, the ‘Traditional House’ built by Laing represented this

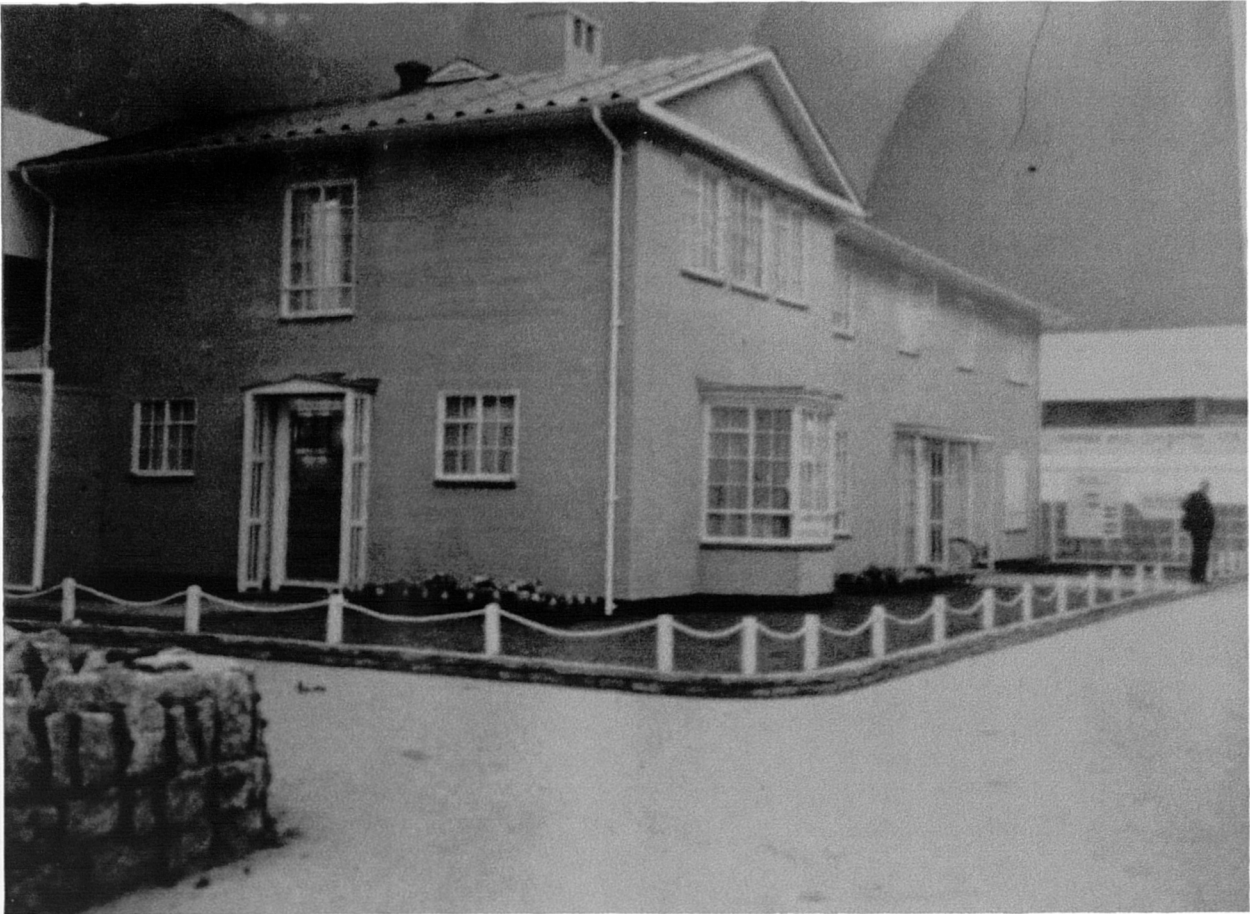


Illustration 7: The 1948 'Traditional House'.

return to brick construction (Illustration 7). In actual fact the exhibit was a terrace of three houses, two showing different internal layouts and one housing an exhibit of housing photographs. Consequently although there were six houses in the show there were only four different designs, all of which were shown under the aegis of the Ministry of Health. One, the 'Airy Rural House' was a modified version of a house shown the previous year. Like another exhibit the 'Cornish Unit House' it represented the Government's concern to provide accommodation for essential workers in different parts of the country such as miners or rural agricultural workers - hence the title 'Rural House'. The Airy building was one of the designs approved by Bevan. All these exhibits were permanent. Only the two story 'Aluminium House', which has already been referred to, was not. It was described as experimental and it seems likely that it never reached production, certainly not in any substantial number.

The 1949 Exhibition registered shifts in the situation of housing provision. First there were houses for sale. 'This village makes history. It shows once again some of those houses we all want to see - houses that can be sold. Though their sale must still be subject to strict regulations, they are none the less, a sign, a portent, a promise, of the easier times to come, we hope' (Exhibition Catalogue 1949: 93). The Foreword, or 'Welcome!', described them as '... such houses as we have not been able to present for a decade ...' (Exhibition Catalogue 1949: 5). This easing of controls over the sale of houses may have been determined more by economic considerations than the housing ones. On 5 November 1948 Harold Wilson, who had gone to the Board of Trade upon Cripps appointment as Chancellor, announced a 'bonfire of controls' which was aimed at prompting industrial growth in the face of the economic problems. (Relaxation of other controls that affected the Exhibition were announced in January and March 1949 with the removal of restrictions on clothes and household textiles (*Daily Mail* 15 March 1949: 1).) The result of this easing of controls on the sale of houses meant that the 'Village of Ideal Homes' in the Exhibition could begin a return to something of its former role as a showcase for building firms

encouraging private sale. But with the retaining of state control over the sales, the role of the 'Village' was perhaps at this stage more important in the creation of desire.

The second shift was that according to the Catalogue 'Building firms absent from the Exhibition for 10 years are glad to be back.' and continued by saying that two firms had returned who had previously been regular exhibitors before the war (Exhibition Catalogue, 1949: 93). Probably included in this reference was Berg who had constructed the 1947 'Scottwood House' although it did not appear under their name. Certainly their exhibit with its cedar shingle roofing, seated Bow window, Suntrap Loggia, and four bedrooms were aimed at private purchase, not the local authority.

Further shifts, in terms of redevelopment and provision of a variety of household sizes, were represented by the exhibit built by Laing for the Ministry of Health. This was a three-storey terrace house. It was greeted by the Catalogue writer as a return of the 'tall house' which was popular with builders a century earlier. Instead of the 'harsh old houses of many stories', 'these are tall houses made kindly again, with fewer and easier steps to tread or clean and but few burdens to haul upstairs and down again' (Exhibition Catalogue 1949: 5 & 93). The Catalogue entry, most likely supplied by Laing, says that the Ministry's exhibit was in anticipation of 'the programme of urban redevelopment in our larger cities'. It appears to be an attempt to deal with some of the problems discussed by the Dudley Committee, but in relation to urban redevelopment as the building could be divided up to meet a variety of needs. It was specifically described as an 'alternative' to a block of flats. Shown at the Exhibition the terrace was divided to show a three-story house with private garden for a family with five children; a two storey maisonette; a two room flat; and a single room flat.

The shift towards the representation of houses for private sale and the forsaking of prefabrication was continued more explicitly in the 1950 Exhibition and, in addition, the first house of foreign design was exhibited since the reopening after the war. All four of the

houses exhibited by British builders were described as ones that, '...may be built for anyone able to qualify for ownership under current regulations' though effectively only three were aimed at the private buyer (Exhibition Catalogue 1950: 99). These three also had their prices given in the Catalogue, and this was the first time since the war that this was the case. The cost of each of the houses was about £2,000, with the 'Berg House' the most costly at £2,166. These prices were quite expensive given that houses from the lower end of the market exhibited a few years later were considerably less. According to the Catalogue entries the £2,000 or so cost was 'within the limits of price fixed by local authorities' (Exhibition Catalogue 1950: 104).

Although the house exhibited by Unity Structures was described in the Catalogue overview of 'The Village of Ideal Homes' as being available for private purchase, the clear aim of the builders was the custom provided by local authorities. This appears to have been their speciality, and their description states that the cost of the building was 'within the most restricted budget for a Local Authority' (Exhibition Catalogue 1950: 111). In the previous year Unity stated they had built 2,000 houses, this year they gave the figure as '3,000 built for Local Authorities' (Exhibition Catalogue 1950: 112). In the successive Exhibitions even as the emphasis returned to the private enterprise builder, the Unity Structures Ltd. exhibits were essentially for local authorities, while those of John Laing and Sons Ltd. were representations of Government Ministry projects. However, these representations were still commercial rather than Government, because the representations were promotional of themselves as private companies and, in the case of Unity, they were also direct sales representations aimed at local authorities.

The 'New Zealand House' raised interesting political issues. It was an example of New Zealand state housing provision. It was shown at the Exhibition as a feature, that is as an attraction of interest, showing how those 'down under' including kin and British emigrants lived. It was further represented in the Catalogue as being undertaken 'in the furtherance of Commonwealth good relations' (Exhibition Catalogue 1950: 100). The articulation of



imperial values was a theme that reoccurred in the Exhibition on a variety of occasions<sup>9</sup>. It was a house which had a number of desirable features including a laundry room and 'the kitchen fitments are very much like those we find in our most modern homes' (Exhibition Catalogue 1950: 100). Although it was shipped from New Zealand the contractors who erected it were the regularly exhibiting building firm E and L Berg. In their Catalogue entry they made the point of its conformity with English local authority requirements (they may well have hoped for some commercial advantage from this). The house is clearly represented as state housing and it invites a comparison with housing in England. The comparison invited, however, was not just with the design of the building, but with state involvement in national housing problems. The Catalogue informed the visitor to the Exhibition that the New Zealand Government became involved in home-building in 1936 because of a housing shortage. It went on to inform the visitor that the both the 'house and the land remain the property of the State' with a quarter of the current houses being built by the State (Exhibition Catalogue 1950: 103). However, what was also emphasised in the entry supplied by Berg and in the features description, was that they were built by private enterprise according to Government plans whether or not they had been the result of independent development or constructed under the aegis of the State (Exhibition Catalogue 1950: 100 & 102).

Labour had only just won a General Election the previous month, albeit with no more than a six seat majority, without the knowledge that comes with hindsight - that the Conservatives were soon to return to power and would stimulate private enterprise building, - this exhibit becomes more significant. The house (actually a bungalow) was of a sufficiently high standard to be featured as a special attraction. It was an example of what state involvement could achieve, and the exhibit would seem therefore to be supportive of the

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<sup>9</sup> There is a hint that they might rather have used the word 'Empire' to 'Commonwealth' (Exhibition Catalogue 1950: 7).

present administration. However, the question might also be what further plans did the present administration have. Nationalisation had been a key part of the Government's programme, although there was less enthusiasm for it than in 1945. That the programme was still in operation is shown by the fact that Iron and Steel were not nationalised until 1951, and the building industry had certainly been a possible candidate at that time. Part of the argument, and certainly part of the reason, for the acceptance of nationalisation was related to the wartime experience of the relative efficiency of state control in contrast to the perceived failures of private industry. This argument was beginning to lose its edge. The 'New Zealand House' provided an example of an efficient partnership between state involvement in housing provision and private enterprise builders. In the situation, such a view cannot have been completely lost on the managers of a firm like Berg, even if it was not a deliberate move on the part of the *Daily Mail*.

The 1951 Exhibition marked a significant shift in the representations of the 'Village of Ideal Homes' and this will be the subject of discussion in the next chapter. One interesting exhibit of that year was the 'Women's Institute House'. The design was based on the analysis of the preferences of the members of the Women's Institute's (W.I.) and there is more than a superficial similarity between this process and the opinions canvassed by such organisations as the W.I. for the Dudley Committee and discussed by Pleydell-Bouverie. It therefore makes an appropriate point of closure for this part of the discussion. In some respects the 'W.I. House' can be seen as a fulfilment of the vision promoted by Mrs Pleydell-Bouverie as a house that women wanted. Not because it specifically followed her recommendations, it did not: but because it was based on the notion of women having control over the process of decision making regarding the design of the material structure that so affected their daily lives. Furthermore it used survey data in a similar way to explore women's needs. Indeed although new questionnaires were issued to the members, it is possible that the germ of the idea goes back to the wartime surveys. However, like the 'New Zealand House', the 'W.I. House' can also be seen as standing in a critical relation to Government provision. While much of the Catalogue entry was concerned to emphasise the



Illustrations 8 & 9: The 1951 'W.I. House' parlour (above) and Kitchen (below).



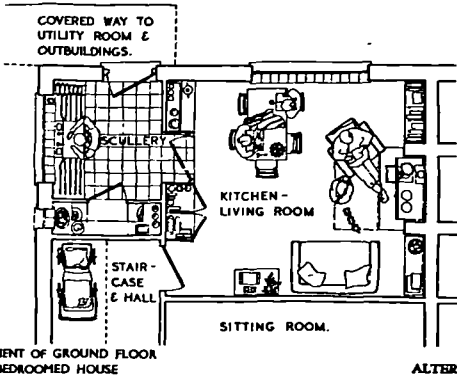
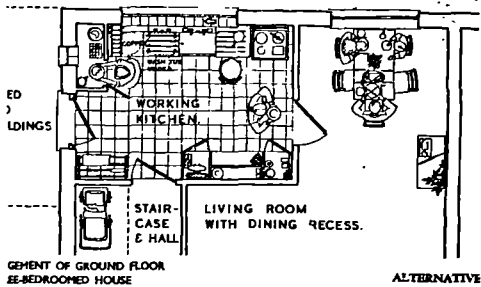
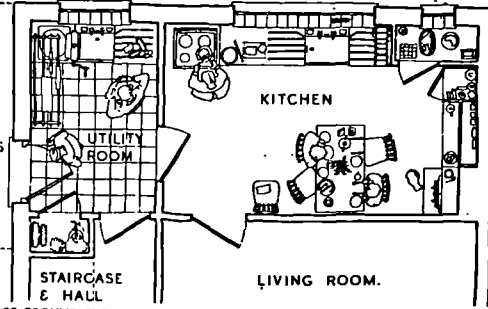


Illustration 10: The three alternative layouts proposed in the Dudley Report.

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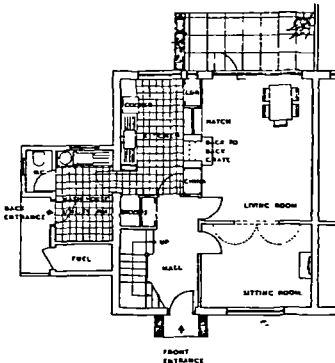
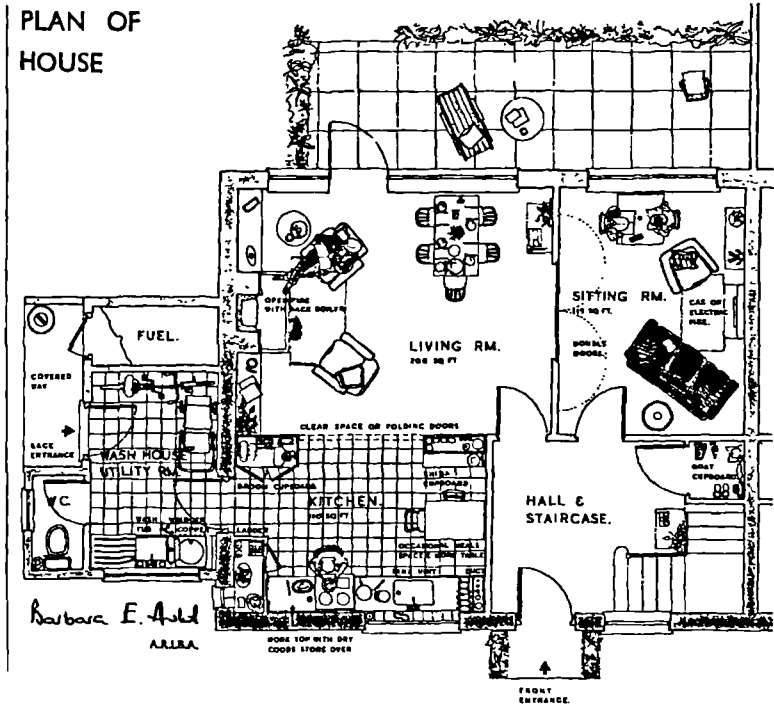


Illustration 11: The plans of the design by Barbara E Auld for Mrs Pleydell-Bouverie to illustrate 'the house that women want'.

way the W.I. members' opinions had been sought, albeit in a somewhat paternalistic manner: 'Here is, not the age old problem of harnessing two women's wishes amicably into one kitchen but those of 400,000' the previous paragraph stated:

... Knowing and sympathising with the persistent endeavours of this great body of country women to obtain more and better homes for those who live outside the range of cities' amenities, the Organisers of the Ideal Home Exhibition offered to provide a site at the Exhibition and to organise without cost to the Institute, the creation of such a house as would best represent the ideas of the members (Exhibition Catalogue 1951: 105).

Both the reference to being 'outside the cities' amenities' and the reference to 'persistent endeavours ... to obtain more and better homes' implies definite criticism with the current situation. That the 'W.I. House' constituted an alternative is clear from the reference in the text to the fact that the house had been constructed '... within the limits of present day regulations and resources'.

The intention of the design, to suggest an appropriate dwelling for the north side of a village street in a countryside location, was emphasised more than once in the Catalogue descriptions. This presumed country setting of the 'W.I. House' was further confirmed by the picture of the cow and the three rosettes attached to its frame that hang on the wall of the parlour above the arm chair (Illustration 8). The choice of the term 'parlour' is perhaps somewhat surprising as it was described earlier by the Dudley Committee as 'old fashioned and obsolete' (*Design for Dwellings* 1944: 14). This too may indicate a more conservative rural approach.

The Illustration of the Kitchen in the 'W.I. House' (Illustration 9) appears to show the room furnished as both a space for cooking (note the kettle on the kitchen range) and for the consumption of food (the laid table), it is also a space for relaxation (the arm chair). The room is a kitchen-living-room, a layout which was frequently considered as more appropriate to the needs of the countryside, and the layout more closely follows the third of

Illustration 12: The ground floor plan of the 1951 W.I. House.

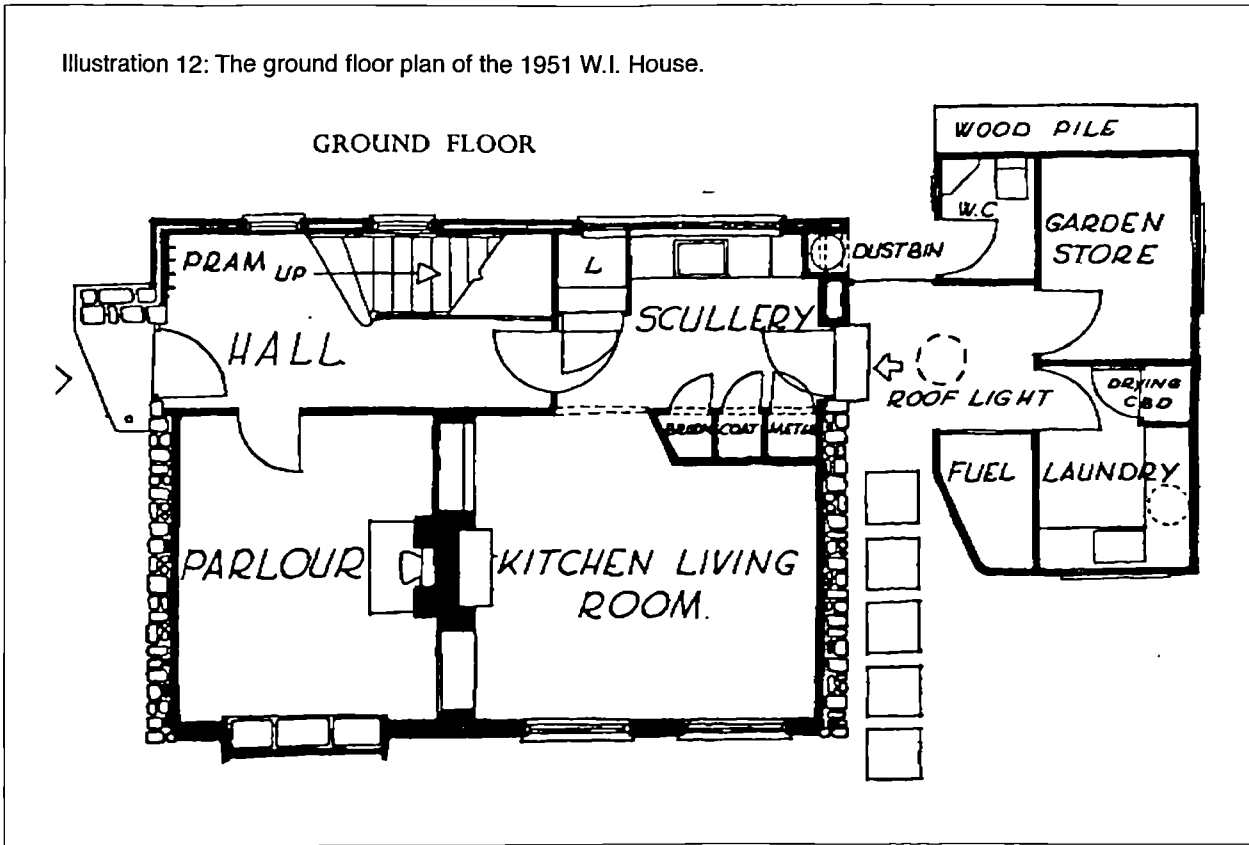


Illustration 13:  
Advertisement from the  
1951 Exhibition Catalogue  
for the Jackson 'Giant'  
Cooker used to furnish the  
'W.I. House'.

See the *Jackson*

**'GIANT' COOKER**

in the

**Women's Institute House...**

**Cooks for up to six people. Self-contained oven controlled by Thermostat. Independent radiant plate with 'Simmerstat'. Efficient grill-spacious hotcupboard. It can be connected to your 13 amp power plug. Interchangeable saucepan shelf which forms a hob when not in use.**

*Approved by the National Federation of Women's Institutes.*

**Like all Jackson Electric Cookers, the 'Giant' has a Guaranteed Oven Food Capacity.**

**THE JACKSON ELECTRIC STOVE CO. LTD.**  
143 Sloane Street, London, S.W.1. SLOane 6248

the three suggestions proposed in the Dudley report where cooking is to be done on a kitchen range (Illustration 10). As has already been mentioned in Chapter One, when Pleydell-Bouverie wrote her book 64% of women with families said they wanted a separate kitchen, a living-dining-room, and a sitting-room. Only 20% wanted a combined big kitchen and living-room, and a sitting-room. The W.I layout would appear to suggest that there had been some shift in opinion. Pleydell-Bouverie suggested that many women who wanted a kitchen separate from the living-room and the scullery were not aware of the vast improvements afforded by modern kitchen equipment and planning. She in fact commissioned a young women architect, Barbara Auld to draw up plans for the 'ideal home' for the book, (Illustration 11). In doing this they chose to ignore the desire for a separate kitchen and provided a dining space in the plan located in the kitchen. However, because of the strength of opinion expressed a small second layout for separate kitchen was also included in the drawing (Illustration 11). Looking at the photograph of the 'W.I. House' kitchen (Illustration 9) and the plans for the house (Illustration 12) and comparing them with the Pleydell-Bouverie and Dudley plans (Illustrations 10 & 11 ) it would appear that the sink in the scullery is not conveniently placed in relation to the cooker, if the range in the kitchen was to be used for cooking. However, page 104 of the Exhibition Catalogue, displayed an advertisement for a Jackson 'Giant' Cooker, saying it was used in the W.I. house and this electric cooker does appear listed in concessionaires in the Catalogue (Illustration 13). The cooker does not appear in the photograph, and unless it was placed at the position from which the picture was taken, it is likely to be been placed in the scullery. If this was the case, it would suggest that despite the appearance in the photograph and the naming of the space in the in the plan as 'kitchen-living-room', the scullery was also envisaged as a cooking space. The scullery would therefore be closer to the separate kitchen preferred by women in their responses to the wartime questionnaires. If this was the case, the 'W.I. House' would not represent a shift towards the Pleydell-Bouverie and first two Dudley Committee proposals. The fact that there was also a separate outside laundry in the W.I. plan would further support the view that the scullery was not intended as a separate utility room in the manner proposed by the Dudley Committee and Pleydell-Bouverie. The

relationship between the spaces for the preparation of food and the spaces assigned for its consumption is one that continued to be explored in the houses exhibited throughout the period under discussion. Other aspects of the design of the 'W.I. House' and its reception by the members of the Institutes are discussed by Ryan in both her thesis (1995) and her book (1997).

In summarising this chapter one can ask the question, what ideals of home were represented in the 'Village of Ideal Homes' in the immediate postwar period. The houses exhibited in the early shows after the war were unique in the history of the Exhibition. Such was the urgency of need that even a temporary house was an ideal home. There were no big houses such as there had been before the war which could boast of a room for the maid. For many people of this period the first and most urgent need was for an adequate shelter and an end to communal living or shared accommodation. Although the emphasis was therefore on the functional aspects of the structure to provide adequate living accommodation and services, the need for the building, particularly in the case of prefabrication, to avoid any visual references to barracks and huts was deeply felt.

The representations in the 'Village' were also unique because the ideals were dictated by the ideals embraced by the Government, and controlled through regulation. These ideals owed much to the ideals that resulted from the deliberations of the Dudley Committee. There was further, an ideological component in that the vast proportion of house building in the country was for state provision, Bevan's houses were houses for working-class people<sup>10</sup>. Just as there were no big houses, neither was there a range of houses exhibited for purchase across the price spectrum. The houses in the show were representations of a socialist housing policy despite the fact that the ideology of the Exhibition as an

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<sup>10</sup> The 1949 Housing Act removed the statutory restriction which limited public housing to the 'working classes' (Malpass and Murie 1990: 62).



organisation was essentially in support of the role of private enterprise. It is possible that through such representations as the 'New Zealand House' and the 'W.I. House' an alternative view both as to the role of private enterprise building and the design of council housing in rural areas was being promoted.

In the immediate postwar period each Exhibition registered shifts that were taking place. In 1947 all of the houses were prefabricated and two were temporary buildings. In 1948 there were the first indications of a return to more traditional methods of construction because of the expense of prefabrication. In 1949 the first houses for sale after the war were exhibited, and private enterprise builders returned to the show as exhibitors. In the following year the role of private purchase was further emphasised. In 1951 the 'W.I. House' was the first dwelling specially designed as an exhibit for the Exhibition to be shown after the war.

The houses themselves bear witness to the problems faced in the period of reconstruction: the shortages of building materials; the shortages of skilled labour; and the urgent need to restore jobs and industry. This highlights how, despite her researches and her advocacy of private enterprise, Pleydell-Bouverie had underestimated the scale of the problem of housing needs and the problems of the shortages of skills and materials. If she did so, then it is likely that many others less well informed did so as well. The importance of her work is its articulation of desire. Once the basic need for shelter was met then these desires again became relevant. as the Exhibitions that took place in the succeeding years bore witness.

## CHAPTER SIX

### Models for Postwar Consumers

The evidence examined in the previous chapter showed that representations of the ideal home in the 'Village of Ideal Homes' in the immediate postwar period were determined in the first instance by economics and in the second by ideology. Following the war, the nation was in severe economic difficulty; it was desperately short of adequate housing, it was short of skilled labour, and it was short of building materials. The Labour Government's measures to meet this economic situation were ideological in several ways: first, for example, in their emphasis that the provision of houses should be predominantly by local authorities; second, that the standard of local authority provision for working people should be of high quality rather than a bare minimum; third, in the idealised picture of the traditional village that informed Bevan's view of the ideal community he wish to reproduce. Because the Government used licences, planning controls and subsidies to achieve its objectives, the buildings used for the representations in the Exhibition's 'Village' were determined by Government regulation and were therefore fundamentally a reflection of Government ideals rather than those of the organisers. The context in which they were displayed, though at the discretion of the organisers, was again subject to both the postwar shortages and Government regulations regarding building materials and labour. However, Catalogue descriptions and two alternative dwellings designs enabled a difference of view.

In addition to featuring the 'W.I. House' as an alternative to officially approved designs, the 1951 Exhibition marked a significant shift in the representations of the 'Village of Ideal Homes'. From a time when there was an extreme shortage of goods to buy, and when the need of many was simply to have a roof over their heads, the exhibition of the homes in 'The Village' placed a new emphasis on the furnishing of the interior. The 1951 Exhibition was held earlier in the year than the *Festival of Britain*. Truefitt's article in the *Daily Mail*, which linked the Exhibition with both the Festival and the *Great Exhibition* of 1851 as well

as his references to luxury following so closely upon the 'age of austerity', has already been mentioned<sup>1</sup>. Not only did the Exhibition organisers construct a model of the Crystal Palace as part of the spectacle of the show, they also made a special feature of the furnishing of the houses in the 'Village of Ideal Homes'. In addition to this, an extremely lavish 'Ideal Kitchen' was organised by Margaret Sherman as a further feature concerned with the interior of the home. Thus although the Exhibition took place while the Labour Government was still in power, and at a time when the process of postwar reconstruction was still underway, this Exhibition marked the significant shift from the basic need of a house as a shelter to the interior of the house as a site of consumption. However, despite the attempt to return to representations of luxury, the postwar situation meant that the Exhibition's representations were for the most part at this stage, though expensive, less sumptuous. Where pre-war Exhibitions exhibited homes of film stars (1936), the King's house (1935), or the bedroom-boudoir (1932): the postwar Government regulations that controlled house sizes and imposed rationing on all, enforced a degree of egalitarianism upon what could be represented. At a time just prior to what was to become a period of mass consumption, the representations of the 'ideal', though they could be costly, were less in the stratosphere of lives typified by film stars, or those who could afford to accommodate servants.

There were six houses exhibited in the 'Village' including the 'W.I. House', discussed in the last chapter. With the exception of the 'W.I. House', all the houses were furnished by journalists who were contributors to the *Daily Mail*. While some, like Margaret Sherman, had a degree of expertise in this area, it is clear that others did not. What comes across from entries in the Catalogue contributed by the journalists themselves, is the lack of expertise and the amateurism of some. Indeed one of them, Don Iddon the newspaper's representative in New York, arranged the furnishing of the 'Coates House' from America by 'airmail,

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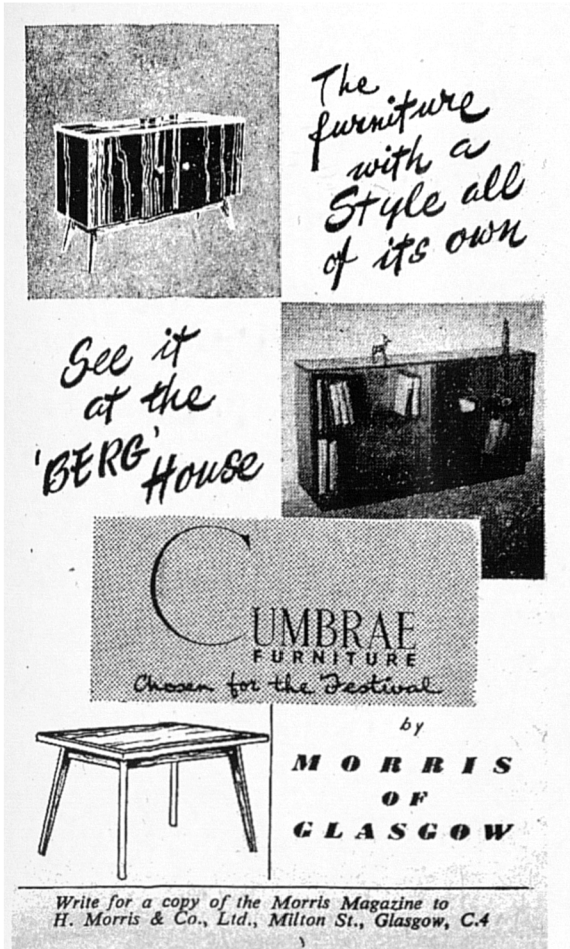
<sup>1</sup> See page 57.

letter, the cable, the transatlantic telephone and telepathy' (Exhibition Catalogue 1951: 101). Nothing could be further from the design establishment's approach to design promotion than Iddon's self confessed lack of knowledge: 'I talk of my "innocence" because I have never furnished a house in my life and have lived in New York flats or apartments, since my early twenties. To this has been added ignorance of conditions in Britain in 1951. I haven't been back home since the spring of 1949' (Exhibition Catalogue 1951: 101).

Although Iddon lacked expertise, it is clear from the article that a major part of the work was undertaken by a Mr Starling from Harrods. The use of Harrods and the descriptions of the items used to furnish the house show that, while the Exhibition's representation may not have been as sumptuous as some pre-war exhibits, they would still have been 'the stuff of dreams' for many who visited. Examples of this are: the kitchen equipment with the latest type of gas stove and refrigerator; the fitted carpets throughout the house of the finest English quality, and the pair of dwarf Regency rosewood book cases and other Harrods' genuine antiques. (The use of antiques was another result of postwar shortages.) Despite the expensive contents, Iddon still called the house a 'little house'. The ideals, the objects of desire, were thus placed, to a degree, in a more democratic context, which would have made participation in the dream of the 'ideal' through consumption more applicable to the visitor.

Despite Iddon's lack of expertise in home furnishing his choice as the person to furnish the 'Coates House' would have been prompted by his American experience. Because the 'Coates House' was designed as an 'Anglo-American' style residence, it would appear that the kitchen in particular was considered to be along American lines, particularly as it had a 'Dinette', a feature described as 'still new to this country' (Exhibition Catalogue 1951: 103). Iddon's furnishing of the house was based on what he described as American conceptions. This was a reference to American living patterns, such as taking snacks and breakfast in the Dinette, and also to the more generally stream-lined designs like those of the kitchen. With their styling, quality, and innovation, American goods were to offer much to attract the consumer as the market developed in Great Britain in the 1950's. Iddon's

Illustration 14: (opposite). Advertisement for furniture supplied by Morris of Glasgow for the 1951 'Berg House' furnished by Collie Knox. The advertisement shows that examples of the firm's production had been approved for inclusion in the *Festival of Britain*.



The furniture with a style all of its own

See it at the 'BERG' House

CUMBRAE FURNITURE  
Chosen for the Festival

by  
MORRIS OF GLASGOW

Write for a copy of the Morris Magazine to  
H. Morris & Co., Ltd., Milton St., Glasgow, C4

Illustration 15: (below). The Lounge of the 1951 'Berg House'. Collie Knox aimed at providing warmth, cosiness and a retreat from the world outside, with shaded light. He also experimented with contrasting colours of wallpaper, bright colours and materials.



furnishing of the 'Coates House' was a promotion of American values despite the utilisation of products purchased in Britain.

Collie Knox, who wrote the *Daily Mail's* 'Radio-Plus' column was another who indicated a lack of expertise. As a bachelor he concluded his article describing his furnishing of the 'Berg House' with: 'I make one plea ... this house represents a man's idea of a modestly ideal home. I beg the women experts to bear in mind, and, though it is too much to expect they will entirely forgive me, I hope the verdict will be: "Well, he did his best, poor man."' (Exhibition Catalogue 1951: 114). Not only does this statement repudiate any claim to expertise, it also raises the issue of gender in the Exhibition and this will be discussed below<sup>2</sup>. Knox stated that his choices had to be made under the strict proviso that everything he selected had to be available for purchase. Like Iddon, Knox's article provides evidence of problems still occasioned by the postwar shortages. Again, like Iddon, he resorted to a particular firm, Morris of Glasgow, for the furniture. He described their products as 'well designed and cleverly contemporary' and 'up-to-the-minute'. An advertisement appearing in the Catalogue shows that their designs had been approved by the CoID for inclusion in the *Festival of Britain* (Illustration 14).

Knox's use of the term 'contemporary' is one of the first uses of the term in the postwar Catalogues, as it is not used prior to 1951. It is clear that he used the word in the sense of 'Contemporary Style' rather than just meaning 'up-to-date'. The advertisement for Morris of Glasgow, and the picture of the Berg House lounge (Illustration 15) showed Contemporary Style furniture. The design style of the sideboard with its thin splayed legs, small round door handles, and veneered finish in the advertisement; and the arm chair in the lounge are, both in design and fabric, typical of the 1950's Contemporary Style. In an

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<sup>2</sup> See page 250.

unpublished essay Ken Montague (1992) discussed the statistical and connotative relationship between the uses of the words 'modern' and 'contemporary' in the magazine *House & Gardens*. He found that while only the term 'modern' was used in 1947 and was still being used with a similar frequency in 1952: the word 'contemporary' had been introduced and occurred three times more frequently, yet by the end of the decade it had dropped out of use. In tracking the popularity of the use of the term as a signifier of a design style, Montague also explored the distinctions in use between the two words as they applied to domestic space. He found that 'contemporary' was more likely to be associated with the sitting-room: whereas 'modern' was more likely to be applied to the kitchen. 'Modern' was also used in connection with a wider range of objects than 'contemporary', use of which was restricted to the description of furniture, textiles, and hand printed wall papers. 'Modern' was applied to utilitarian objects connoting a 'freedom from inefficiency' whereas contemporary objects were 'valorised in the language of taste and discernment, or the appreciation of art, craft and design'.

There was a comparative delay before these terms were adopted by the Catalogues of the *Ideal Home Exhibition*, as part of the language of the Exhibition, however, the use of 'contemporary' continues right to the end of the period examined here. Because the number of houses exhibited each year varied, and because the textual style used by different exhibitors varied considerably, the material does not yield to a numerical content analysis in the manner adopted by Montague. Nevertheless, there were some general trends that may be noted. 'Contemporary' does not appear until 1951; and unlike *House & Gardens* it is used more frequently towards the end of the decade than at the beginning. Mostly it is restricted to the houses exhibited by Davis and Berg, though later in the period other contractors employ the term. Sometimes the term refers to the furnishings and sometimes to the architectural style.

Although readers of *House & Gardens* would have found 'contemporary' predominating over 'modern', in the Exhibition Catalogues visitors to the show would have found the term

'modern' applied much more frequently in the house descriptions and the editorial articles. Indeed rather than 'contemporary' the next most frequently used term was 'traditional'. 'Modern' was used in a number of different ways to describe the home. It appears as a description of decor and furnishings such as 'beauty on modern lines', a 'modern four-sectioned unit settee', 'a fireplace of modern design'. It is used as a general reference, 'modern houses' or 'modern home'. Functional household items like taps, stoves, boilers, low-level flush suites, are described as 'modern'. The term is only used once of the kitchen in general, but frequently to describe its facilities and labour-saving devices. The term is used occasionally to describe building materials and methods, and a little more frequently to speak of modern times and conditions. In this latter sense there is a reference to a house of 'modern contemporary architecture', and in a similar manner a reference to a 'modern Georgian house.' Whereas 'contemporary' is frequently linked with 'style' or the word 'attractive', 'modern' is a term of functionality, progress, innovation, and of the current situation. But it would be wrong to reduce any term to a simplified meaning because there is a change and play in their signification as the following quotations show. 'A pleasing contemporary style has been achieved by using traditional materials in a modern manner' (Exhibition Catalogue 1956: 89). 'This bungalow, which is designed on traditional lines, incorporates many new and novel features' (Exhibition Catalogue 1956: 95). 'The "Winchester" House has been chosen this year to show the practicability of linking contemporary and traditional design. ... The interior lay-out on the other hand is entirely contemporary and lends itself to furnishing in the modern idiom ...' (Exhibition Catalogue 1957: 87). Thus it would appear that while the reader of *House & Gardens* was being informed about design style, the issues for those exhibiting at the Exhibition were more complex. The houses need to be represented as being up to date so far as technological developments were concerned, as there was a strong desire for an improved standard of domestic life. This was evidenced both by Pleydell-Bouverie and the Dudley Report among others. It was to this desire for functional improvement that the rhetoric of things being 'modern' spoke. However, while there was also a desire to re-establish an improved home life, which could involve reference to past values, there was a further, and to a degree





Illustration 16: (above) Kitchen of the 1951 'Unity House' furnished by Margaret Sherman on a budget of £500 for the whole house. The Gas appliances and refrigerator are listed among the Unity 'concessionaries' rather than those of Sherman, suggesting that the appliances were supplied with the house.

Illustration 17: (below) The 1951 *Daily Mail* 'Ideal Home Kitchen' also furnished by Margaret Sherman. The display represented an unrestricted budget.



converse, desire for the ‘new’ after the war. The language of the *Ideal Home Exhibition* descriptions reflected these attempts to combine notions of functionality, style, and values traditionally associated with home.

Given the number of new houses, temporary or permanent, that were being erected, many households would have been faced with the prospect of equipping a new home, confronting them with style choices and new developments in consumer durables. For those visiting the Exhibition, although it was commercial advertising, it also functioned as instruction in consumption. Thus Margaret Sherman, editor of the *Daily Mail* ‘Ideal Home Service’, was given the task of completely furnishing the small local authority style ‘Unity House’<sup>3</sup> with £500. For this two-bedroomed house she envisaged a young family of four. The essential idea in the furnishing of this house was to show what could be achieved on a more restricted budget. (Because of the interruption to domestic life caused by the war, many people would not have had experience of furnishing a home, as this would not have been possible for quite a long period.) Sherman described the furnishing she had provided as ‘cheap and cheerful’; ‘cheap’ in this case indicated that almost all items were purchased in the ‘tax free’ price range as £500 was not ‘so much money in 1951’<sup>4</sup> (Exhibition Catalogue 1951: 117 (emphasis as original)). The tone of her article describing the project was strongly didactic and the furnished ‘Unity House’ stood as an exemplar. Sherman gave first priority to the purchase of beds, ‘I knew that they must be comfortable at almost any cost, because inferior quality is no economy.’ With the bedroom furniture qualities of finish and design had to be balanced with adequate drawer space. For this reason she chose dressing chests rather than dressing tables. As Unity provided the basic kitchen fittings, (Illustration 16), her

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<sup>3</sup> The Catalogues show that, of the exhibitors, Unity were especially involved with local authority developments, where their system building approach was particularly applicable. At the time of this Exhibition they were in the process of reaching a figure of four and a half thousand houses built for local authorities.

<sup>4</sup> Before the war, £250 per annum was regarded as the dividing line between the classes. Households in receipt of this amount or more constituted about one quarter of the population (Bowden in Johnson (ed) 1994: 256).

next priority was the living-dining room. Here she allowed herself the luxury of 'fairly large carpet, knowing that at present this would mean only bedside rugs in the bedrooms'. The stairs were also carpeted for reasons of 'morale' as well as 'utility' with a plain durable haircord. She avoided complete suites not only for financial reasons but because more 'adaptable furniture' gave 'freer play to imagination and personality'. She stated that she spent a lot of time on the light fittings and their positioning, not only because of the importance she placed on what appears to be a Modern Movement reference, whether conscious or not, of 'functional fitness of purpose'; but also because - somewhat surprisingly, given that this was a reference to artificial lighting - 'good lighting means good health' (Exhibition Catalogue 1951: 117).

The instructional tone of the article is clear, the reader of the Catalogue was told 'inferior quality is no economy', that selecting individual items of furniture rather than suites was not only cheaper, it gave room for more creative scope and personal expression. Even for those who did not acquire a Catalogue the house would have had notices telling of the budget on which it was furnished. It stood as an exemplar of what could be achieved with the right knowledge and skills. Sherman's furnishing of the 'Unity House' was a model of what could be done with a local authority dwelling.

Sherman's house is an example of the way the 'Village of Ideal Homes' effectively drew on and developed the tradition of the 'model house'. This is a concept that Gaskell (1986) suggests can be traced back to the aesthetic concerns of the Picturesque theorists of the eighteenth century and their practices in estate landscaping. To enhance an idealised vista of an estate landscape, rural cottages would be positioned in such a way as to create an attractive view. This meant that in the first instance attention to the design of buildings began with concern for their exterior appeal, rather than with any interest in the internal arrangements or the domestic needs of the occupants. The housing conditions of rural labourers were such a scandal according to Newby that there were a succession of Government enquiries in the 1850's and 1860's. He says that although 'for the most part

the farm worker was consigned to an overcrowded hovel' a 'few large landowners were stirred by their social conscience to construct "model" cottages and villages' (Newby 1987: 84). Thus although model housing began from a focus on the external appearances, other concerns led to internal needs being considered as the object of improvement. Consequently, the concept of model housing developed to embrace internal or external design considerations or both.

Though the idea of model housing began in the rural context, the disquiet over the problems of Victorian urban housing meant that proposals to rectify the appalling conditions in towns and cities were put forward. These again produced model housing examples that attempted to improve the domestic living conditions of the occupants. The word 'model' in the term 'model housing' is used to signify a proposal that provides a practical example or a standard, it is an exemplar that can be copied or emulated. The basic intention of model housing was didactic, it provided practical patterns that could be followed either in the form of plans or built examples that could be copied. Model housing was basically paternalistic, however well intentioned and reformist, the concern was to provide the plans and ideas for the improvement of the housing of working people, but they were not involved in this process.

Many different attempts to bring about improvements in housing conditions through the provision of exemplars come into the category of model housing and broaden its definition. These were as diverse as the Garden City movement, the development of model codes and bye laws, the Tudor Walters Report after the First World War; the Dudley Report; and Pleydell-Bouverie's own book and plans. The *Daily Mail* and the *Ideal Home Exhibition* became directly involved in a model housing project in 1922 when the 'Daily Mail Village' at Welwyn Garden City was opened to coincide with the opening of the Exhibition at

Olympia. The project consisted of forty-one dwellings representing sixteen different construction systems, and was accompanied by an international housing conference which drew delegates from thirty-eight nations. The 1939 exhibit by Elizabeth Denby<sup>5</sup>, the 'New Zealand House'<sup>6</sup>, and the 'W.I. House'<sup>7</sup> are all further examples of model housing incorporated into the 'Village of Ideal Homes'.

The 'Village of Ideal Homes' however, represents an appropriation of the 'model house'. Though it retains the didactic element and to varying degrees presents the buildings as exemplars of improvement, in the main they are no longer reformist but commercial. Indeed once the restrictions on sales were lifted the majority of dwellings in the 'Village' were examples of houses available for commercial sale, they were essentially adverts for the company and promoted sales by the creation of desire. It is at this point in the history of the Exhibition, prior to the lifting of restrictions on sales, that makes the houses in the 'Village' interesting. As structures, they may have been representations of the developing aspirations of builders and purchasers, but they were still basically representations of Government controls, regulation and provision. However, despite the fact that postwar shortages imposed an element of restriction, internally they were open to the possibilities of display. The result was a bringing together of a dwelling whose structure represented the official ideals of social provision with an interior that functioned as an instructional, but commercial, exemplar of individualised consumption represented as ideal taste.

As the postwar economic situation improved and the market for mass consumption developed, the *Ideal Home Exhibition* had in place an excellent instrument for the creation of desire and for education in domestic consumption, namely the furnished show home. The

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<sup>5</sup> See page 120.

<sup>6</sup> See page 143.

<sup>7</sup> See page 145.

model house which had developed as an exemplar of improvement of living conditions became in the *Ideal Home Exhibition*, through the notion of an improved quality of personal living, an exemplar of how to consume. Important in the way it functioned is the fact that there were always several furnished show homes, which could represent distinctions of style or approach and later in the decade articulated difference of income. The 1951 'W.I. House' contributed a 'homely' vision. Here was a co-ordinated consensual pool of all the expertise of its thousands of members. Don Iddon's house showed how English quality and antiques could be combined with streamlined American living. Collie Knox's house exemplified Contemporary Style and comfortable bachelor living, and Margaret Sherman taught her visitors how to make the best choices on a restricted budget. The different furnished dwellings acted as models of a variety of distinctions through which cultural and social meanings were constructed. The postwar reaction against 'Utility', despite its design values, showed that the consumption of domestic goods was not merely functional, it was also symbolic. Goods have cultural and social meanings. 'Utility' as even its name implied had become a signifier of wartime privation, whereas the Contemporary Style with its free art based forms and references to scientific innovation spoke of the future. Consumption involves not only selection on the basis of function and efficiency but also on the socially signifying distinctions of taste and style. The show homes in the 'Village of Ideal Homes' were in situ as a model of how to consume and appropriate domestic goods, and combinations of goods, at the point at which postwar industries were about to produce a host of new items and consumer durables.

In contrast with the relatively limited budget to furnish the 'Unity House', Margaret Sherman was placed under no such restrictions in setting up the 'Daily Mail Ideal Home Kitchen' in the same year, as can be seen by a comparison of Illustrations 16 and 17. The 'Ideal Home Kitchen' was staged as a celebration of the first year of Sherman's Ideal Home column in the *Daily Mail* newspaper. Sherman said that most housewives she had spoken to dreamt of a kitchen with ample work space, a large amount of cupboard space, a place that was gay, and provided with a sink under the window from which they could

'observe passers by or the flowers' (Exhibition Catalogue 1951: 231). Most women, she claimed, wanted a space 'charming enough to eat in'. Although everything in the kitchen was of British manufacture the design was described as being in the American tradition. This reference was not expounded, but presumably it was considered to be signified by the spaciousness of the area, the organised modern layout, and the dining recess. Again, despite the very traditional rhetoric with its stress on Englishness to be found in some of the Catalogues and in the *Daily Mail* articles about the Exhibition, this is another example of the American influence on British domestic life promoted through the Exhibition as well as elsewhere.

The Illustration shows the kitchen to be divided into two spaces, a cooking area and a dining recess. The kitchen had a U-shape working area with a double stainless steel sink under the window. Such sinks have since become unremarkable but they were certainly not so at that time. Also unusual for the period was the large number of electric points just visible under the cupboards next to the cooker hood. Not only was the size of Sherman's kitchen considerable, its contents were luxurious for the period. At this point during the fifties in England only a small minority owned a refrigerator, thus the list of kitchen appliances was exceptional: modern electric cooker; refrigerator; automatic washing machine; drying cabinet and broom cupboard with a fixed ironing board fitment. Sherman described it as, "... everything which most of us have not.' The considerable opulence this represented was expressed in the *Daily Mail* report of the show, which commented on the kitchen by saying that it was, 'admittedly in its entirety too costly for the average home.' The paper continued by reporting the Duchess of Kent, who visited the Exhibition, as saying of the kitchen, 'I'd like to scrap my own kitchen and take over this one. It's lovely, but I don't think I could afford it' (*Daily Mail* 8 March 1951: 5). Margaret Sherman's kitchen was also a model, but it was no longer a model of social improvement, rather it was a model of 'unconstrained consumption'. Sherman began her Catalogue article by talking about the kind of kitchen housewives 'dream of' (Exhibition Catalogue 1951: 231). The desired, the aspired to, the dreamt of, constituted one definition of 'ideal'. Her kitchen

design was a conscious attempt to provide a material expression to such a notion of the 'ideal'.

The U-shape working area could be considered as an implementation of ideas of efficiency in kitchen design. But, although Adrian Forty describes how attempts were made to apply Taylorism to the kitchen, distinguishing between efficient and inefficient layouts in such pre-war books as C. Frederick's *Scientific Management in the Home: Household Engineering*, a later exhibit claimed the absence of proper investigation (Forty 1986: 217)<sup>8</sup>. This exhibit was the 'Ideal Kitchen' of 1955 presented by the Council of Scientific Management in the Home. They stated that '... no national organisation had undertaken a full-scale investigation into just what should be the requirements for an ideal kitchen' (Exhibition Catalogue 1955: 103). As a consequence they sought opinion and undertook a time and motion study that involved housewives all over the country. However in addition to presenting an efficient layout, they also criticised kitchens of a clinical design 'where everything is so white and streamlined that an operation could be performed there at any moment.' Rather they wanted a room that was 'part of the home'. In doing this, they echoed Margaret Sherman's earlier sentiments when she described the colour of the egg-shell blue units as a 'break-away from the clinical quality of an all-white working area'. The choice of white is often related to ideologies of cleanliness and efficiency, but clearly there were reactions against this aesthetic because clinical associations did not fit with associations of home and comfort and the time that women spent in the kitchen, especially if it was to be a space for the consumption of food<sup>9</sup>. Nevertheless, although she rejected clinical white, Sherman still chose an aesthetic for the kitchen that reflected ideologies of cleanliness and efficiency, describing the kitchen area as 'sleek' and 'shiny'. The dining recess was

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<sup>8</sup> Dolores Hayden casts Christine Frederick in the role of an anti-feminist and states that the implementation of Taylorism by a single individual was a logical impossibility. (1981: 285).

<sup>9</sup> See Forty (1986) Chapters 5 and 9.



intended as a foil to the kitchen area with candy-striped walls and beech wood shelves and furniture.

Margaret Sherman's exhibit was staged at a time when the financial situation for most people was thought to be tight. There was consequently some surprise at the amount of goods sold at the 1951 Exhibition. Fifty representative stall holders were questioned by the organisers and most said that they were amazed at the amount of trade they were doing. Expensive items were as popular as cheaper ones. Export reject china sold almost as soon as it went on display even including sets that cost 28 guineas. One firm that sold a new line in Chinese carpets that retailed at £44 -7s said that they were astonished at the speed with which they were selling both them and cheaper reproduction Persian carpets. They were reported as saying they had sold as many carpets in the previous two days as had been sold during the whole period of the Exhibition the previous year. A furniture exhibitor reported that they had sold £2,000 worth of utility bedroom suites in two days. Ornamental glass was also in 'surprisingly large demand' and sales assistants were reported as taking orders ' ... as fast as they could write.' A firm selling hand-made brightly coloured pottery reported that it too was doing twice the amount of business of the previous year. Visitors to the Exhibition gave as their reason for making the purchases the fear that there might be shortages of goods in the future, and the fear that prices might rise (*Daily Mail* 1951 9 March: 5). Initially this trend was thought to represent just a few exceptional days, but levels of sales were maintained through the period of the Exhibition, with goods as different as televisions, hairdryers, and boilers selling well, as were expensive refrigerators (*Daily Mail* 1951 21 March: 5). It was further reported at the Exhibition that there was a demand for colour. People were said to be looking for 'brightly coloured wallpapers rather than distemper, and hand painted ornaments' (*Daily Mail* 1951 9 March: 5). Though there may have been a fear of shortages, the sales suggest a positive desire on the part of the public following the war for colour and consumer items.

The desire for a change in domestic material circumstances had political consequences. The small Labour majority that resulted from the 1950 General Election led Atlee to call a new election on 25th October 1951 which was won by the Conservatives. This victory is partly attributed to the failure of the Labour Government to achieve its target of 240,000 houses a year (Burnett 1986: 286). In actual fact the Labour Party polled more votes than the Conservatives but boundary changes favoured the latter, as did the reduced number of Liberal candidates. However, an important part of the Conservative campaign had been the promise of '300,000 houses per year'. Adelman comments: 'The major concerns in the election were the cost of living and housing; and both figured prominently in the Conservative campaign. Hence the middle-class reaction against Labour revealed itself again, especially in London suburbia and the South-east; 11 out of the 21 gains the Tories made from Labour were in this area' (Adelman 1994: 62). Jefferys says that middle-class voters were especially concerned 'not with the fading wartime ethos of fair shares, but with the material affluence that might result from economic growth' (Jefferys 1992: 63). Thus in the natural catchment area of the *Ideal Home Exhibition*, the values of the Exhibition of home and material consumption had proved to be politically significant.

Macmillian's pledge to build 300,000 houses a year was redeemed in 1953. Burnett says that 'Macmillian's success was due to a combination of more generous subsidies, raised to £26 14s 0d a year by the Housing Act of 1952, and a stimulus to private builders as licences became more easily available and were removed altogether in 1954' (Burnett 1986: 286). This change of policy created an important shift in the 1953 'Village of Ideal Homes'. The visitor to The 'Village of Ideal Homes' was told: 'And now for the first time - in 14 years - it presents the house *one can buy without a licence* - the first specially planned to illustrate in real practice the freedom that was returned to us with the dawn of 1953. That again makes history' (Exhibition Catalogue 1953: 93 (emphasis as original)). The house referred to was a building by Davis Estates, the floor area was just under a thousand square feet, which was the limit for licences to be granted without restrictions. (The complete removal of restrictions

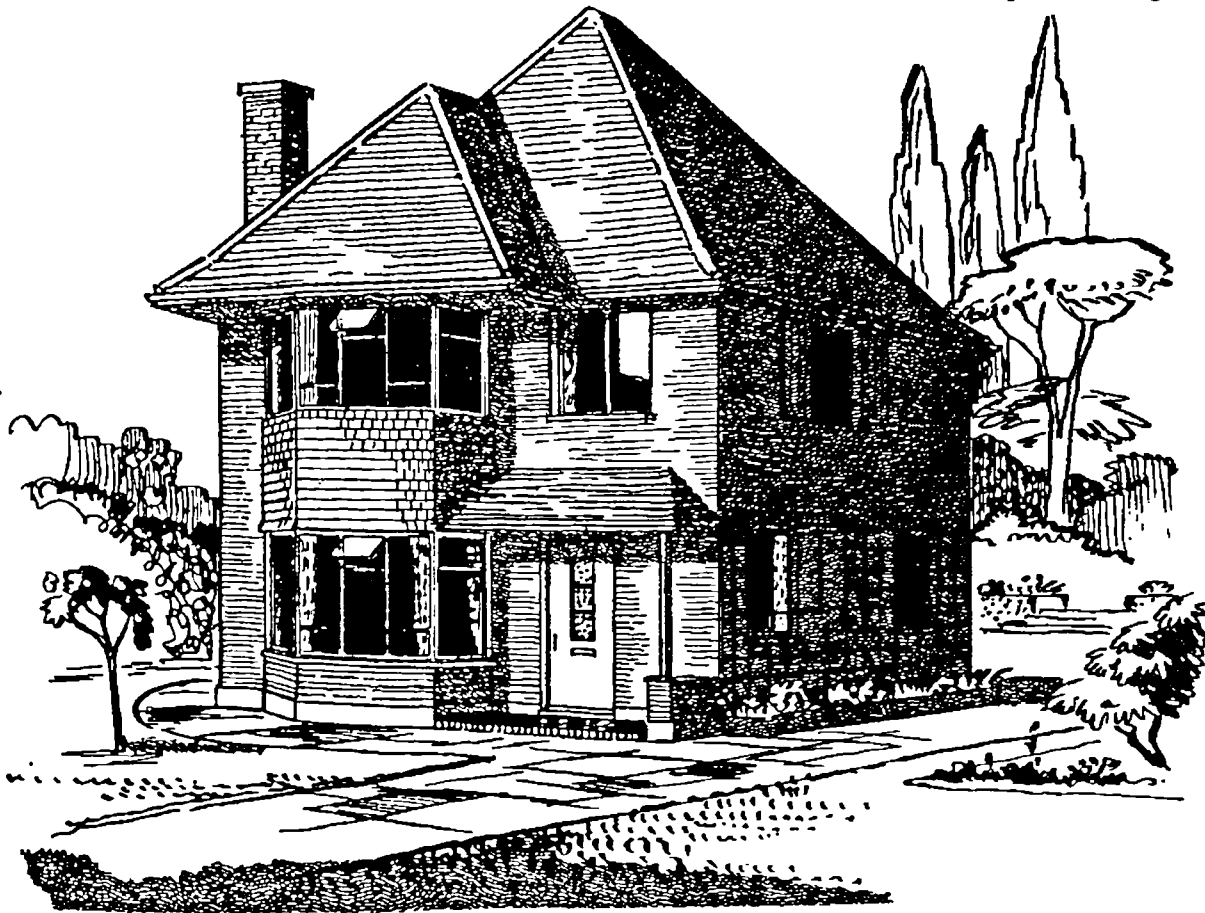
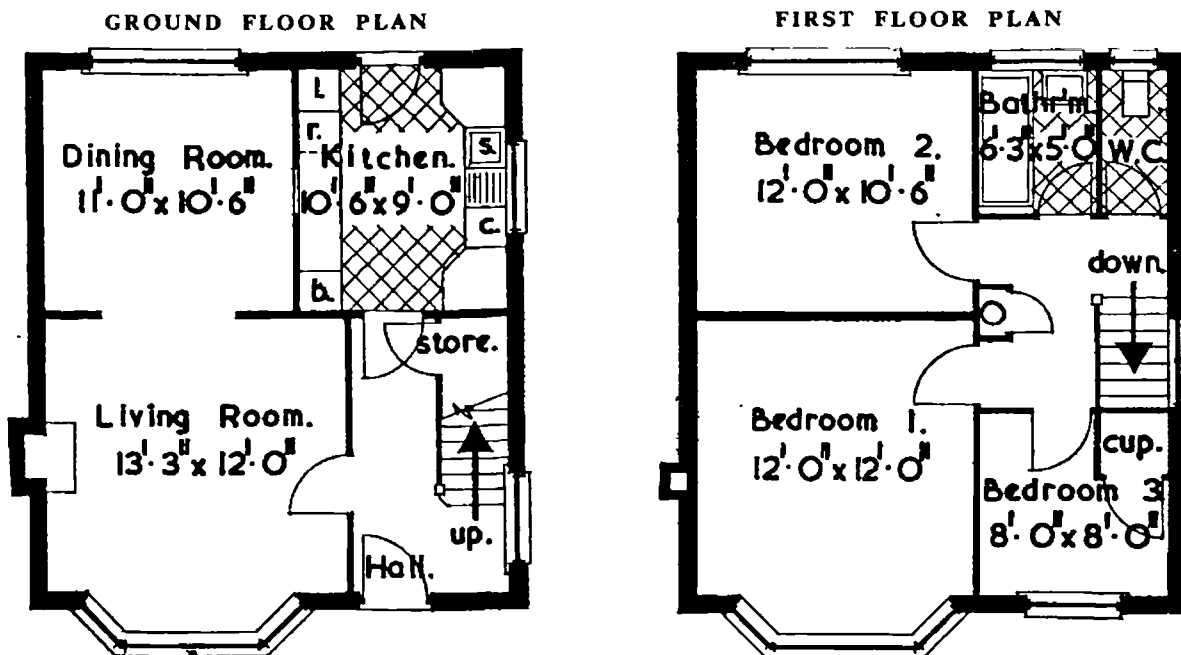


Illustration 18: The 1953 'Davis House'.

Illustration 19: Plan of the 'Davis House'.



AS EXHIBITED AT THE DAILY MAIL IDEAL HOME EXHIBITION 1953

took place in November 1954, with the result that the 1955 Exhibition was the first postwar Exhibition where all houses could be exhibited for sale without licence restrictions.)

The 1953 'Davis House' (Illustrations 18 & 19), furnished by Ann Temple, was the first house in the postwar Exhibitions which could simply be purchased at the Exhibition. It was therefore both a sales example and a model of domestic consumption. The external appearance, both in overall design and the detail of facing bricks combined with tiles or stucco, was quintessentially that of a small privately owned suburban detached house. The vertical stress of the bay window, the elided twin pyramid-like roof upon the near cubic form, all combined to give the building the look of a separate private single unit, which Davis Estates described as 'dignified'. Internally the utility-room proposed by the Dudley Committee and favoured by Pleydell-Bouverie was sacrificed to allow the other rooms to maximise the available space imposed by the restriction to a 1000 superficial square feet. David Clendon remarked in an interview that one of the differences between the private houses where he lived and the nearby council houses was that the council houses all had utility-rooms. The plan shows that the only immediate access between the kitchen and the dining-room was via a serving hatch.

Furnishings for the show house were provided by Harrods, and the *Daily Mail* journalist Ann Temple began her description by saying, 'When you are looking at this house keep in your mind the fact that you can own it personally, that you can have it put up on your own site.' As an expression of the ideology of home ownership, this could hardly have been clearer. Again like the previous descriptions there was a detectable didactic tone as for example: 'It makes your buying twice as interesting if you are in the know about design and workmanship, and you learn best by seeing for yourselves.' And 'Do let me call your attention to the way the colour tones change in degree and temperature as they flow from a material - how a smooth thin surface and a rough woven texture can create the most delicate and subtle differences from the same colour' (Exhibition Catalogue 1953: 99). This didactic

tone was carried through in an article she wrote about furnishing the house in the *Daily Mail*:

The Breughel in the little girl's room has evoked happy comment. I believe in having the very best possible pictures for children, pictures they will not outgrow, and which they will always love. Little children are so drawn to true beauty. Even two-year-olds love this Breughel and pick out its deep blues and reds and the stories they tell themselves in each enchanting detail (*Daily Mail* 12 March 1953: 6).

In furnishing the 'Davis House' Ann Temple considered that the first requisites of a home were cheerfulness and comfort, but 'To have these you must have quality in your furniture. Anything gimcrack quickly becomes distinctly uncomfortable as well as unpleasant to the eye.' This she gave as her reason for choosing 'Contemporary Style' furniture, arguing not for its aesthetic but that in a small house it was simple and practical, and further that manufacturers claimed the designs more easily enabled improved quality and workmanship. Temple thus suggested that there was more to furnishing a house than taste, the furnishing also revealed the owner's discrimination and knowledge about quality. Temple informed her readers that colour was 'of immense importance to the atmosphere of a house, especially a small house' and that she favoured change and variety, and that she hoped her choices would 'stimulate' the 'originality and imagination' of the visitors to the 'Davis House' (Exhibition Catalogue 1953: 99).

Temple's choices thus reflected those of the shoppers at the Exhibition two years earlier. The article which described the sales of coloured wallpapers and 'gaily painted pottery' at the Exhibition also reported that, 'People are demanding colour this year' (*Daily Mail* 9 March 1951: 5). Like the 'New Look's' rejection of the controls and privations of war, this turn to colour seemed to reflect a desire to banish the drabness of that period. However, what is interesting about the didactic tone of Temple's writing is that she did not claim to be an expert. In her newspaper column headed 'FIRST OF ALL GET THE COLOURS RIGHT' she wrote of the questions she had been asked about furnishing the 'Davis House', "'From where did you start?'" is the one most often put to me. I can tell you how I set about it, but,

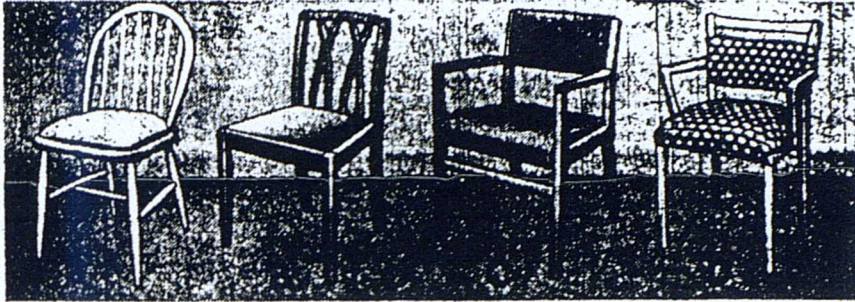
remember, I am only an amateur following my own hunches without looking up the professional routes' (*Daily Mail* 12 March 1953: 6). Despite being an amateur, Temple, the newspaper, and, presumably, Davis Estates were happy that she directed the furnishing of the house and that she instructed both readers of the *Daily Mail* and visitors to the Exhibition how they ought to go about such a project. The furnished house was set before them as an exemplar. There was no indication that a professional ought to have been employed. This is in part a reflection that the design professional had yet to achieve the recognition and status of later decades, it is also, in part, a reflection of what at the time gave someone authority to speak on such matters. If taste and discrimination were not the result of formal training, then they would most likely appear to be related to social position and the confidence it bestowed of the possession of a cultivated sense of refinement. What constituted the ideal home was therefore a matter of taste and common sense and was as a consequence essentially ideological. The values expressed in the various representations of the ideal home represented in the 'Village of Ideal Homes' were constructed from the commercial productions of the construction companies, and the unproblematic conceptions of home held by the organisers of the Exhibition and the journalists of the *Daily Mail*. Both the *Daily Mail* and the Exhibition appear to have conceived of their audiences as those who could be subject to instruction and of themselves as equipped so to do.

This instruction in taste and consumption was continued that year in the pages of the *Daily Mail* which ran three weekly competitions to furnishing a dining-room for which the prize was £1,000 on each occasion. The competition was to choose furniture to furnish a dining-room of exactly the same specifications as were shown in the 'Davis House' plan (Illustration 19). Each day for six days pictures of items of furniture were published (see for example Illustration 20). Readers were told:

CUT HERE

**FURNISH YOUR HOME CONTEST No. 1**

**THE DINING-ROOM—No. 1 CHAIRS.** The dining-room is 11 feet wide by 10 feet 6 inches deep, with space for electric fire in the centre of the north wall, and french windows on the east side of the room leading to the garden. The room opens out into the lounge on the west side. **FROM TODAY'S ITEMS YOU MUST SELECT THE TYPE OF CHAIR.**



(Furniture chosen at Harrods Ltd.)

Another set of pictures in this week's contest will appear tomorrow. Cut out and save all pictures until Tuesday, when your Entry Form will be provided together with full instructions for posting. **ALL SIX SETS OF PICTURES MUST ACCOMPANY YOUR ENTRY.**

NAME.....

CUT HERE

Illustration 20: Example of the competition published in the *Daily Mail* for the 1953 Exhibition.

Illustration 21: Richard Hamilton *Just What Is It That Makes Today's Homes So Different, So Appealing?* (1956).





Illustration 22: Kitchen in the 1956 'House of the Future'.

Illustration 23: Lounge in the 1956 'House of the Future'.





... study all the items carefully and select those (one from each set) which taken together, best furnish the room from the point of view of artistic appeal and comfort. Next, on the same basis make your second, and, finally, your third selection of items.

Remember that what you are choosing is the furniture and decorations for the room as a whole - not merely individual items (*Daily Mail* 4 March 1953: 6).

Although the *Daily Mail* positioned itself as an arbiter of domestic taste, Gordon Russell, Director of the CoID, was among the judges of the competition along with Jeanne Heal, designer, radio and television commentator, and Frances Lake, editor of the *Daily Mail* Ideal Home Book. Gordon Russell's place among the judges would have implied that the Exhibition and newspaper were in touch with a variety of experts when required as well as indicating a degree of impartiality.

In 1956 the *Daily Mail* celebrated its Diamond Jubilee and incorporated the Exhibition in the celebrations. This took the theme of looking sixty years back and sixty years forward. One of the forward looking exhibits was The 'House of the Future' which was constructed in the 'Village of Ideal Homes' (see Illustrations 22-23). At first sight this does not seem to be part of the Exhibition's address of consumption, for its object was to present how houses and their interiors might have developed in twenty-five years. It was intended to be one of the attractions that entertained the visitor - part of the spectacle of the Exhibition. Indeed its designers, the young radical architect's Alison and Peter Smithson, seemed to have nothing in common with the traditional or even 'Contemporary Style' suburban house that was the mainstay of the 'Village of Ideal Homes'. However, Frampton, suggests that their exhibit at the 'This is Tomorrow' ICA Independent Group's exhibition at the Whitechapel Art Gallery, a metaphorical shed, had a consumerist dimension:

... within this cryptic and almost casual metaphor of the shed the distant past and the immediate future fused into one. Thus the pavilion patio was furnished not only with an old wheel and toy aeroplane but also with a television set. In brief, within a decayed and ravaged (i.e. bombed out) urban fabric, the 'affluence' of a mobile consumerism was already being envisaged, and moreover welcomed, as the life substance of a new industrial vernacular (Frampton 1985: 265).

Frampton continues by saying that Richard Hamilton's ironic collage, *Just what is it that makes today's homes so different, so appealing*, was produced for the Whitechapel exhibition and that the Smithsons' *Daily Mail* exhibit 'was evidently intended as the ideal home for Hamilton's muscle-bound "punch-bag" natural man and his curvaceous companion' (Illustration 21). Frampton continues by discussing the Smithsons' relation to the promise of consumerism suggesting that they were 'ensnared' by an 'intrinsic ambivalence' shifting in the later half of the fifties from an initial sympathy for proletarian lifestyle towards more middle class ideals of conspicuous consumption and that they 'continued to regard the chromium consumer product in the crumbling tenement or the plastic interior as the ultimate liberating icon of their conciliatory style' (Frampton 1985: 265).

The visitor to the Exhibition, is unlikely to have read the exhibit in the way Frampton did, they would have seen the plastic impregnated plaster interior of the 'House of the Future' as a prediction of living in 1980. But it was a prediction that extolled the benefits that technological change would bring to the home. Thus, although the aesthetic of the Smithsons' design was very different from the suburban values of a 'Davis House' or a 'Berg House' and the irony of Hamilton, the message of the Smithsons' design, that the 'House of the Future' would be a house that incorporated the latest in modern domestic technology, was exactly consistent with the message of the *Ideal Home Exhibition*, with its repeated claims to show all that was new in modern domestic equipment and consumer durables.

The kitchen of the 'House of the Future' (Illustration 22) featured a Galley Island separating the cooking area from the utility-room. It was equipped with electric non-stick titanium saucepans to eliminate cooker rings; an oven, a forerunner of the microwave together with a refrigerator that were all above waist level; gamma ray treated food to eliminate bacteria; instant boiling water; and waste disposal units. The Illustration shows the now dated use of 'Wareite Pitch Pine' for work surfaces and cupboard doors. The utility-

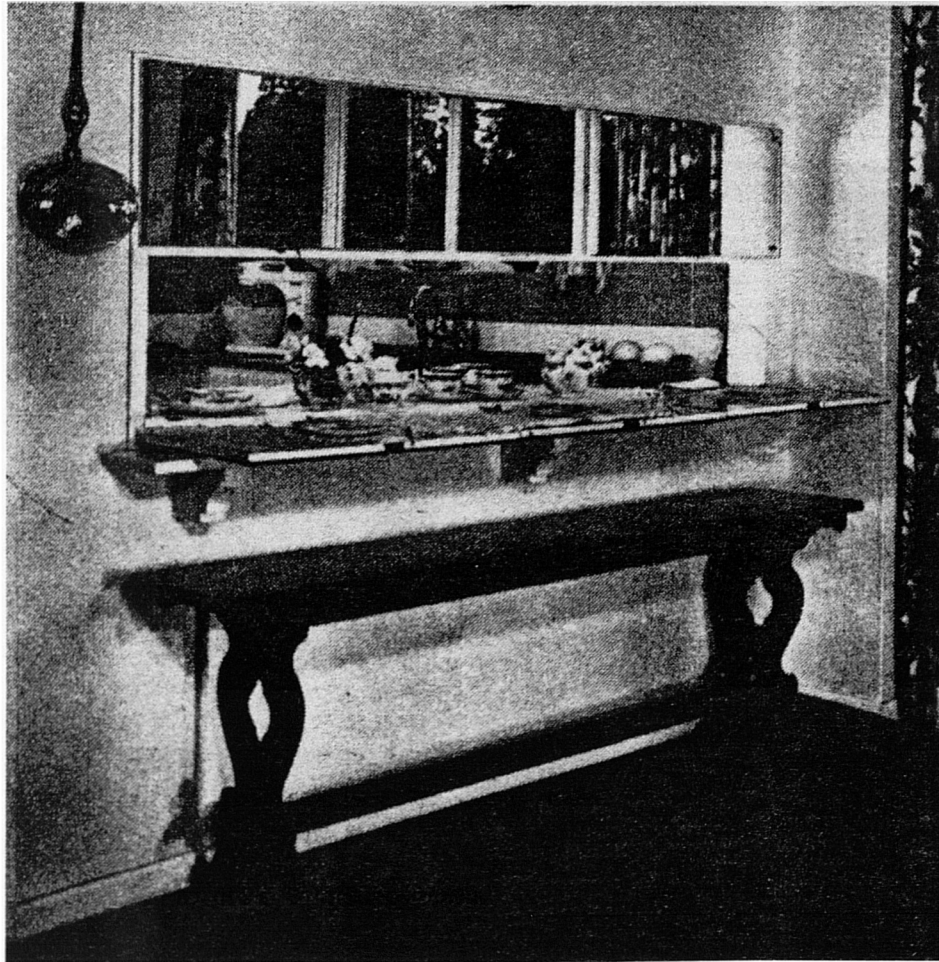


Illustration 24: Eating bar in the 1956 'Berg Surrey House'.

Illustration 25: Plan of the 'Berg Surrey House'.

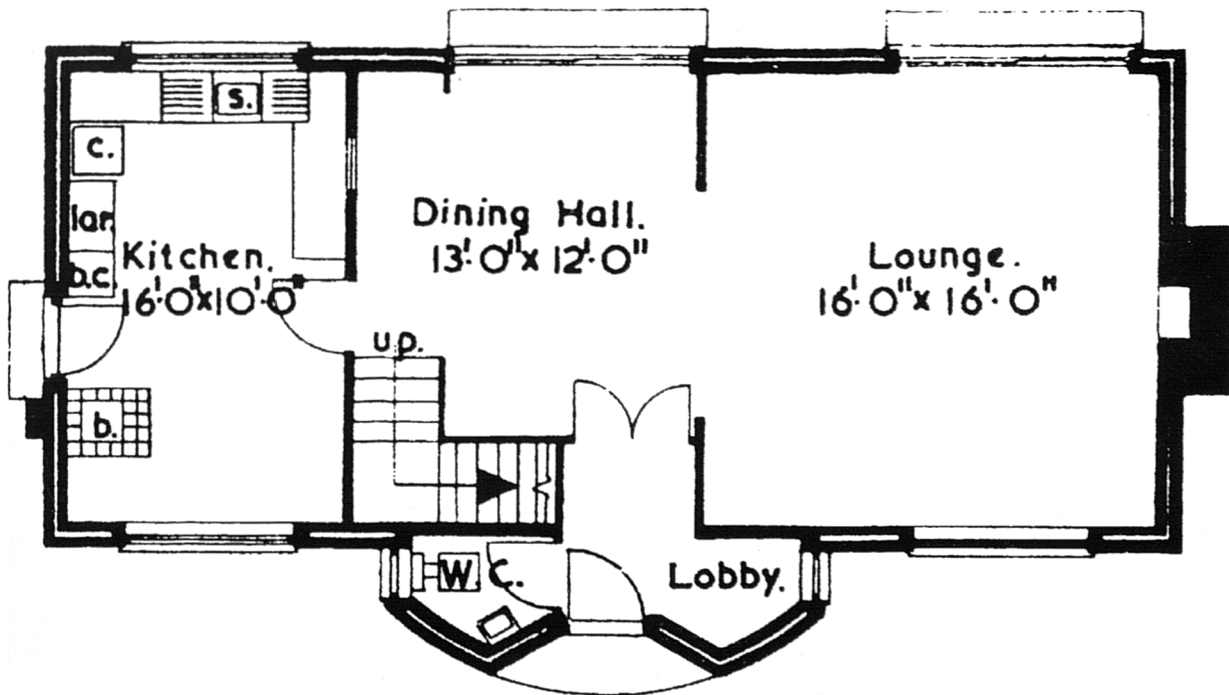




Illustration 26: 'Allday' windows a special feature of the 1956 'Berg Surrey House'.

Illustration 27: The 1959 'Unity Britannia Mews' furnished by *Woman's Realm*.

**"UNITY BRITANNIA MEWS"**  
featuring  
**LOW COST LUXURY**



Ask your Builder for details or call at Showhouse  
Estate Developers!  
our exclusive service will interest you

**UNITY**  
**STRUCTURES LIMITED**

Head Office: 5/15 Cromer Street · W.C.1  
Telephone: TERMINUS 7873/80

room had a washing machine with spin dryer and a rotary ironer. However it was envisaged that most clothes would be of modern drip-dry non-iron fabrics. The one bedroom house was designed around a small central patio garden.

The lounge (Illustration 23) featured a table that rose up from the floor to appropriate levels; a combined radio/coloured television set into the wall; and, as with the rest of the house, heated floors and air conditioning. The trolley featured in the Illustration was equipped with a built-in toaster; infra-red griller; an automatic heated plate dispenser; together with the usual heated compartments. The other rooms in the house: bathroom; bedroom; and dressing-room, all had similar labour-saving features. This was the fundamental conception of the 'House of the Future' that technology would more or less eliminate housework. Although it did not offer any products for sale, it reinforced the ideology that ideal living, which was defined as the elimination of domestic chores, would be achieved through the possession of consumer durables. The 'Village of Ideal Homes' in which the 'House of the Future' appeared was entitled the *Village of Today and Tomorrow*. Placing the house in the village alongside the houses for sale created a structure of signification whereby the meanings associated with it could be read onto the others.

In the same year Berg exhibited the 'Surrey House' (Illustrations 24-26). Like the 'House of the Future' the Berg kitchen made considerable use of 'Wareite' for the work tops cupboards and fitments. Particular attention was drawn to the eating bar: 'A special feature of this house is an eating bar which has proved in practice to be a most labour-saving device and adds still further to the efficiency of the now famous Berg Kitchen' (Exhibition Catalogue 1956: 84). The photograph (Illustration 24) shows this to be a type of elongated serving hatch and the house plan (Illustration 25) indicates that it gave access to the kitchen at one end of the open-plan dining hall. Not totally dissimilar from the 'House of the Future', the 'Berg House' had a semi open-plan lounge and dining hall. Central heating is not mentioned in the house description in either the Exhibition Catalogue or the books of house plans, but some form of heating like that would have been essential for such a layout,

and this again was an aspect of the Smithsons' design. Another feature of the design to which attention was drawn were the 'Allday' picture windows (Illustration 26). The Catalogue says they were fitted to 'maintain a bright aspect throughout the house' (Exhibition Catalogue 1956: 84). This attention is evidenced by the selection of the windows for a specific press photograph, as included in the album, and by reference to them in newsreel footage. Although features like the windows are explained in functional terms - to provide 'a bright aspect throughout the house' because they form an aspect of differentiation they also constitute a symbolic element of consumption. This symbolism is partly located in discourses of respectability, and discourses about light and health, to which both Elizabeth Denby in her 1939 exhibit and Pleydell-Bouverie in her book made reference. But more importantly, Ravetz says, 'The picture window became a selling point of speculative housing, providing an ideal opportunity for showing off all the furnishing and appointments of the new home. and so replacing the bay window ...' (Ravetz 1995: 130).

The Exhibition celebrated its Golden Jubilee in 1958 and this year represented a significant shift in the furnishing of the houses in the 'Village'. The majority of the show houses for that year were furnished by either women's magazines or home magazines, and this is a pattern that continues for the remaining period with which this thesis is concerned. After the war, beginning with *Woman's Journal* in 1947, magazines had certainly been previously involved with furnishing the houses from time to time. This shift resulted in either the majority or, in some years, all the houses being furnished by magazines which included: *Woman's Own*, *Woman's Realm*, *Home*, *Practical Householder*, and *Homes and Gardens*. Of the magazines involved, while some would have had a specialist knowledge of interior design that made them an appropriate choice, others were certainly not magazines associated with design style. Whatever the commercial interest that determined the choices, effectively furnishing the ideal home was shown not to be the province of the specialist so much as of publications associated with life style and home interests. From the Exhibition's perspective, not to mention the builders and developers, this considerably increased the publicity received. Each of the magazines took the opportunity to run feature articles

describing the interior decoration over which they had presided. Lewis made no such suggestion in his report but the coincidence appears significant. Either there was a decision to involve magazines to mark the Golden Jubilee and the venture proved sufficiently successful for it to be continued in successive years or, as a result of discussions, possibly of Lewis' Report, it was decided to use magazines like these to broaden the appeal of the furnishing and to increase the publicity. The consequence was that the Exhibition's role as an apparatus for education in consumption was both further legitimised, and considerably extended through the circulation of these magazines.

This notion of instruction is clear in the article published in *Woman's Realm* about their furnishing of the 1959 'Unity Britannia Mews', which described the furnishing of both a three bedroom flat and three bedroom house (Illustration 27). The interest of the article is that Unity housing was aimed at the less exclusive end of the market - they described themselves in the Catalogue as providing 'low cost luxury'<sup>10</sup> (Exhibition Catalogue 1959: 8). The *Woman's Realm* article began by saying, 'So many of you wrote in, asking for advice on planning, furnishing and decorating your homes and so many of you had the same sort of problems.' As a result the magazine imagined two families the Smiths and the Joneses whose needs exemplified the problems readers had written in about. Readers were told that they could see the results at the Exhibition and:

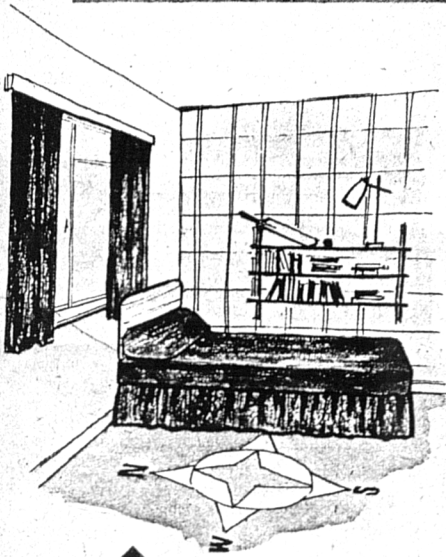
We realize that not many people with families are in a position to start replanning a new home from scratch. But we believe that you will want to copy and adapt many of the features that we've used at Olympia to make your home more convenient and attractive (*Woman's Realm* 3 March 1959: 22).

For the two dwellings the magazine envisaged the house occupied by the Smiths, a couple with three children of primary school age. The house, it was thought, required to be practical and easy to run 'without sacrificing the decorative features which grown-ups like about

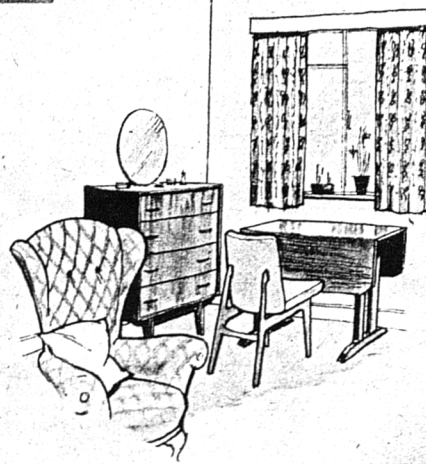
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<sup>10</sup> The exhibit shows how the emphasis of Unity's designs at the Exhibition were no longer aimed mainly at local authorities but had shifted to include private development.

**THE FLAT**



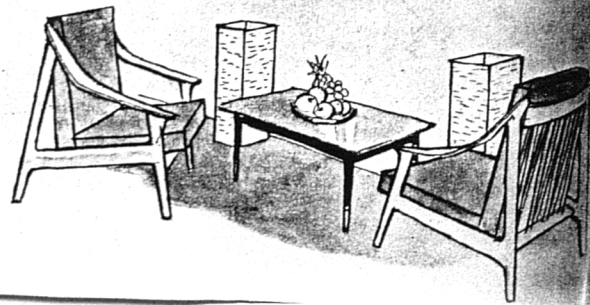
The Joneses' young son has a room of his own in which three walls are white and one is orange. He does his homework here. Curtains and bedspread are black and white. The floor covering is blue linoleum with an inlaid compass design



Granny Jones has her own bed-sitting room in the flat where she entertains her friends. She has several pieces of her own furniture, to make her feel really at home. The colour scheme is an attractive one in apple green, grey and orange



The focal points of the living-room are a beautiful Oriental picture and Chinese lantern-shaped floor lamps, which give a soft, diffused lighting. Chairs are upholstered in purple. Curtains have red poppies and white daisies on a purple ground



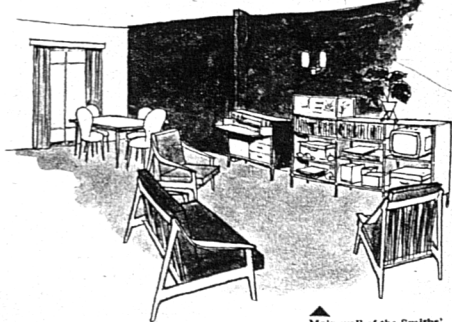
Illustrations 28 & 29: Interiors for the 1959 'Unity Britannia Mews' published in *Woman's Realm*.

**an Ideal House**

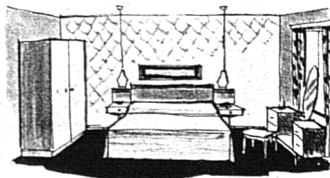
**THE HOUSE**



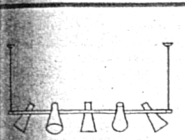
The hall is seen through the folding doors from the living-room. It has a light green corded carpet, ivy-leaf wallpaper and forest green full length curtains



Main wall of the Smiths' living-room is dark—a beautiful green marbled wallpaper. The carpet is old gold and the curtains a magnificent kingfisher blue. For this sketch, the dividing wall has been omitted to show you the dining-room



Sky blue walls, a paler ceiling and a bow-patterned paper behind the bed give a feminine look to the double bedroom. Golden Key's Continental bedstead has table fittings. Carpet and bedspread are aubergine, curtains are pale blue, aubergine and green



A distinctive lighting group is installed on the landing. It's a horizontal rod with five directional lights for all-round illumination

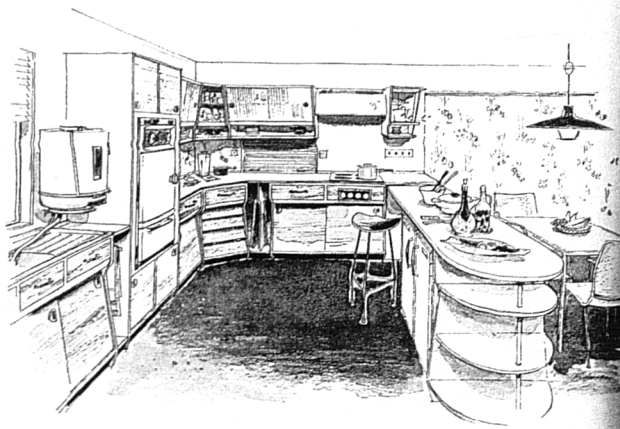


A constellation of four lights hangs in the centre of the living-room ceiling—an interesting example of contemporary lighting



For the nursery we've chosen a gay linoleum dotted with red and yellow, and yellow curtains. The bunk blankets are boldly striped. There is a blackboard on one wall, and fibre board on another for displaying pictures





Equipments for food preparation, cooking and serving in the kitchen we designed for the *Crombie* stand at the *Ideal Home Exhibition* is in a U-shaped arrangement. It includes the separate oven and hob units and twin refrigerators under a counter top. Dishwasher is above the sink. Automatic laundry equipment is on the fourth wall (below right)

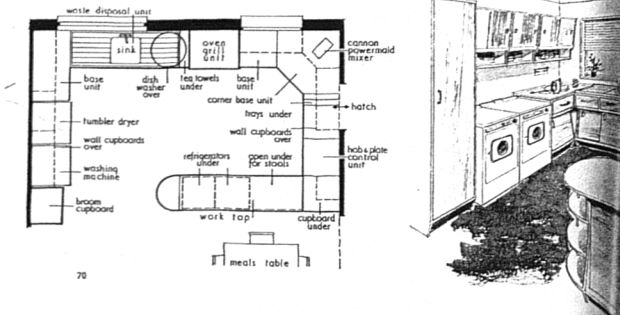


Illustration 30: No expense spared kitchen designed by *Ideal Home* magazine, 1961.

Illustration 31: Dining-room of the 1959 'Davis House' designed by *Woman's Own*.



them.’ The Joneses lived in the flat with a teenage son and a granny and exemplified the problem of three generations sharing together. Hence a great deal of thought was claimed to have been devoted to Granny’s corner. The detailed suggestions are shown in Illustrations 28 and 29. A significant proportion of the text in the article was given to naming the manufacturers of the various items: ‘ ... we’ve chosen Witney blankets and Everwear-Vantona sheets to match our colour schemes. The flat has Aerial nylon sheets; all the mattresses are Dunlopillo.’ - each of the magazines show that it was necessary to acknowledge the concessionaires in some way. Thus within an apparent discourse of home making, commercial advertising was a central issue. More advice was actually given in the captions of the illustrations than in the main text, even so, readers’ attention was drawn to the such things as the easy cleaning properties of linoleum, the colour schemes, pictures, and the importance of lighting. The text of the captions concentrated to a considerable extent on the colours employed, providing further evidence of the concern with colour during this period.

Part of the advice given to consumers by magazines was about prices and budgets. *Ideal Home Magazine* (no connection with the Exhibition)<sup>11</sup> furnished the Hallmark bungalow and a kitchen exhibit in 1961. The kitchen (Illustration 30) was based on a similar idea to Margaret Sherman’s ten years earlier. The magazine began:

We were asked to design a “money no object” kitchen for the Exhibition. It was to incorporate the most modern ideas in layout and equipment, with provision for meals and easy service to and from the adjoining dining-room. ... Despite the pie-in-the-sky instructions, however we made money a definite object, for obvious reasons. We feel the kitchen to be about as luxurious as you can get and still keep well in sight of your bank account (*Ideal Home* February 1961: 71).

The prices of all the equipment and fixtures were shown in a separate box on the page:

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<sup>11</sup> *Ideal Home*, an IPC publication, represents the appropriation of the Exhibition’s title by a rival newspaper group, a fact which is said to have caused some anger.

**WHAT IT COST****Prestige kitchen units, wood grain Melamine**

Broom cupboard	22	13	8
Corner base cabinet	20	19	0
Double-drainer sink unit, stainless steel top	51	8	5
Single base cabinet, PB6	15	7	5
Single base cabinet, PB5	18	5	6
Corner fitment	22	16	0
Four Wall cupboards @ £10 .6s 9d	41	7	0
Wall cupboard	8	4	7
Corner wall unit	8	18	0
Wall end unit	4	18	6
Extension worktops over tea towel rail and tray rack @ £2	4	0	0
Tricity unit cooker hob housing cabinet	28	10	0 (approx.)
Tricity unit cooker oven and grill housing cabinet	28	8	0 (approx.)
	<u>275</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>1</u>

**Working equipment**

English Electric Liberator automatic washing machine	110	5	0
English Electric Tumble-Dry	60	18	0
Tricity unit cooker			
surface hob	40	0	0
oven and grill	57	10	0
Two Frigidaire Sheerlook @ £51 9s	102	18	0
Cannon Power-maid motor base	19	7	0
Food mixer attachment	7	11	0
Blender attachment	3	2	0
Haigh Tweeny de luxe waste disposal unit	48	4	8
Nu-Aire extractor fan (with iris shutter)	20	6	0
G.E.C. Dubarry wall clock	3	7	6
G.E.C. 100-watt heater for tea towel recess	1	12	6
Biflo mixer taps for sink	6	15	0
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b><u>757</u></b>	<b><u>6</u></b>	<b><u>4</u></b>

**Additional**

Electrolux dishwasher: price not available at time of going to press, but probably about £60. Peninsular counter: made to special order.

The kitchen area was envisaged to be 15 by 9 ft incorporating a meals corner that would add another 6-7 ft to its width, it was also assumed that the heating was from an outside boiler room. As this was an imaginary kitchen, the fact that the washing equipment was placed in

the kitchen highlights the absence of a utility-room in the thinking of the magazine. Despite the Dudley report and expressions of opinion such as Pleydell-Bouverie, in order to save on building costs, the utility-room was not yet an expected feature. The kitchen was colour schemed in natural wood grained Melamine, pale yellow work tops, washable patterned wallpaper of yellow, orange, lime and grey. Two refrigerators were chosen to avoid one large cabinet. The luxury represented by this kitchen is revealed by the fact that at this time only 16 per cent of households in the United Kingdom had a refrigerator compared with 98 per cent in the United States<sup>12</sup>. On the assumption that a good percentage of the refrigerators were owned by those in social groups AB, who were under represented at the Exhibition, it is likely that well over 84 per cent of those attending did not possess such an appliance.

The increase in the use of hire-purchase was an important factor in the rise of consumer durables that came to be owned by the population, and part of the 'education' in consumption offered by magazines was with prices and budgets. It is likely that in this respect they were in a symbiotic relationship with the Exhibition. Anne Lennox who was responsible for furnishing a number of houses at the Exhibition wrote an article for *Woman's Own* suggesting budgets for several different family situations. This particular article was not based on the *Ideal Home Exhibition*, but on the earlier *Furniture Exhibition*. (This was one of the exhibitions that Lewis considered posed a threat to the *Ideal Home Exhibition*.) There were sometimes expressions of moral anxiety about hire-purchase and articles such as Lennox's had an important role in its legitimation. Lennox wrote: 'Hire purchase has become, in the last few years part of our way of life. Nowadays millions of pounds are spent in this way every month. And there is nothing wrong with having things

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<sup>12</sup> *Daily Mail* 3 March 1960: 13.

you need and paying for them as you go along - as long as you don't take on more than you can afford' (*Woman's Own* 6 February 1960: 10).

The amount of expenditure on items for the home that people of the period were able to afford were typified in her article by several examples. The first was a young married couple who rented an unfurnished flat with the husband's income of £9 per week as a shipping clerk and the wife's of £4.10s as a sales assistant, They could furnish a sitting room on a commitment of about £1 per week .

	£	s.	d.
3 piece suite	49	16	6
Record cabinet	8	18	0
Occasional table	6	10	0
Square table	3	11	6
Carpet	20	8	6
Cash	89	4	6
10% deposit	8	18	6
24 monthly			
Instalments	3	13	8
<b>H.P. Total</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>

Lennox's second example was a schoolmaster who earned £20 with a wife who had no income of her own who wished to furnish what she described as a modern family room.

Oval Table	17	0	0
Cupboard Unit	19	0	0
Cupboard/ drawers	19	0	0
4 dining chairs	35	0	0
Settee bed form	39	18	0
Chair	19	19	0
Carpet 9'* 12'	31	4	0
Coffee table	10	10	0
Sisal carpet	4	0	0
cash	195	11	0
<b>H.P. Total</b>	<b>213</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>
payments £8 1s 4d per month for 24 months + 10% dep.			

A third example was provided by a couple in London on a similar income who wished to refurbish the kitchen in a house they were buying. The Hygena units cost £110 5s, a deposit of £11 10s would have been required resulting in a balance of 24 monthly payments of £4 10 7d. These figures not only show the kind of incomes and expenditure that those who attended the Exhibition at the beginning of the 1960's had, they also show that many of the displays in the Exhibition would have represented a degree of costliness and luxury beyond the pockets of such visitors (*Woman's Own* 6 February 1960: 10).

For the most part not only was there was a core group of builders supplying the houses for the 'Village of Ideal Homes' who exhibited each year, but from 1959 some of the magazines formed a link with one particular firm. *Home and Gardens* became associated with Crouch, *Home* with Berg and *Woman's Own* with Davis. The articles that the magazines published to accompany their work on the show's exhibits were in the form of advice to the consumer. There is also a shift in the advice given compared with that given earlier in the period. This shift is towards more advice being given on colour and textiles. The houses in the Exhibition together with photographs and drawings of the houses in the magazines are used to provide exemplars of how to decorate the home. *Woman's Own* in particular was quite explicit about the show home being an exemplar upon which readers and visitors could base the decoration of their own homes. In 1959 the magazine wrote of their furnishing of the 'Davis House': 'This exciting house, with its spacious open-plan design, has given plenty of scope for Home Editor ANN LENNOX and her team of experts to show you the very latest ideas in decorating and furnishing, as well as those little touches which make a house into a home.' A headline on the same page read: 'New practical ideas to adapt to your own home. You will find something exciting in every room of the house' (*Woman's Own* February 1959: 10). The emphasis throughout the period was on strong contrasting colours and boldly patterned fabrics. The dining-room (Illustration 31) was described as 'Cool countryside colours - green furnishing, blue glass and mosaic, and beech and elm furniture - are warmed by red upholstery.' While the study was described as being



Illustration 32: Kitchen of the 1958 'Crouch House' designed by *Woman's Own*.

highlighted by a bright orange wall, chosen to strike a warm note against the cool blue upholstery and green carpet' (*Woman's Own* February 1959: 11). The dining-room the next year had: 'Palest eau-de-nil walls' which 'set off striking furniture with the gracious appearance of marble and tapestry. Roses tumble over the brass-finished chairs ... A cool colour scheme is warmed by a rich red nylon carpet and glowing pink table napkins. Bold charcoal and white curtains are in glazed chintz' (*Woman's Own* February 1960: 11). The magazine developed the feature on their furnishing of the show home further in 1961. The four centre pages of the magazine could be pulled out and made into a sixteen page booklet. The idea of a pullout section was repeated in 1962, but this year it became '50 Ideas For Your Ideal Home'. A numbered list drew attention to various aspects of the furnished house as direct advice to the reader or visitor to the Exhibition.

One of the things that becomes apparent in the furnishing of the show homes was change in the decoration of the kitchen. Before making their link-up with Davis Estates, *Woman's Own* furnished the 'Crouch House' in 1958; under the heading 'Now it can be pretty, too' they described the decoration of the kitchen, which had a highly patterned wall paper of sea-blue roses that was used for the ceiling as well as the walls (Illustration 32). The following year the kitchen was described as 'Streamlined and pretty,' (emphasise as original) patterned curtains were used to 'add a feminine note to a practical kitchen', the year after that the kitchen was described as 'efficient but pretty' (*Woman's Own* February 1959: 13 and *Woman's Own* February 1960: 13). In 1961 the magazine claimed that women had convinced their 'men-folk that we don't want *clinical* kitchens any longer' and that the 'next step is to convince them that *glamour* is the coming thing' (*Woman's Own* February 1961: 7 (emphasis as original)).

An exhibition '*The New Look, Design in the Fifties*' was organised in 1991 by Manchester City Art Galleries curated by Lesley Jackson, who wrote an accompanying book of the same title (1991), and has since contributed a further book '*Contemporary*' (1994). Differences emerge when the exhibition and the books are compared with the



furnished homes exhibited in the *Ideal Home Exhibition*. Jackson argued that a number of different sources lay behind the visual imagery of the fifties Contemporary Style. Jackson cited for example, the hope placed on atomic energy and showed how imagery based on the atom could be found in such different items as wallpaper designs, clocks, and light fittings. In a similar manner the paintings of Jackson Pollock and Miró, the sculptures of Henry Moore and a number of other artists she suggests contributed to the visual language of the period, along with more humble sources like fruits and vegetables. The patterns and fabrics in the furnished houses bear some relation to those selected by Jackson as representative of the time. However, this is less the case with the overall style of the interiors. The interiors depicted in Jackson's book '*Contemporary*' and in photographs displayed at the exhibition show a more styled and refined approach compared with the *Ideal Home Exhibition*. Jackson's images are closer to the visual language of the CoID than the everyday popular choices of magazine's like *Woman's Own* and the Exhibition. A similar observation applies to her comments about colour. Jackson explains that war had placed restraints on the use of colour, '... so that when austerity came to an end, widespread indulgence in extremes of colour, whether in curtains, carpets or shades of lipstick, was peculiarly intense.' However, she continues 'there is an unfair tendency ... to think of the 1950's as a period of complete anarchy in the use of colour. Liberated it certainly was, but anarchic it was not, a fact underlined by initiatives such as the carefully planned *House and Garden* colour scheme launched in the early 1950's' (Jackson 1991: 73). The examples of colour schemes given above, which represent the taste of everyday culture, are somewhat more 'anarchic' than the more design establishment choices described by Jackson. What emerges is that Jackson represents the style of the 'design establishment' while the *Ideal Home Exhibition* bears witness to a less coherent, less refined, more vernacular style of everyday choices and living.

A comparison between the furnished show homes of 1951 and those ten years later reveals considerable differences. These are not so much differences of style, for the Contemporary Style held sway for most of the time, rather the differences are differences

of content, brought about not least because of increases in affluence and of consumption. The Exhibitions of this period registered several shifts that positioned the interior of the home as a site of consumption. The first shift was the focus of the 1951 Exhibition on the furnishing of the houses in the 'Village of Ideal Homes' by journalists working for the *Daily Mail* newspaper. Although this was a publicity event, it suggested that furnishing the home was not the province of style experts, furthermore, in using people with relatively ordinary occupations it naturalised the representation of the home as a place of consumption. Despite the 'Englishness' of the newspaper's political ideology, the Exhibition naturalised and appropriated American influences with respect to consumption in the home in a similar manner. Prior to changes in the issue of building licences, the houses in the 'Village of Ideal Homes' were exemplars of Government provision, so far as the building structure was concerned; but the interior of the buildings were exemplars of private consumption. The provision of the furnished houses as instructive examples can be seen as being derived from the model house and its historical development. While some of the buildings like the 'W.I House' relate specifically to the model house, effectively the Exhibition appropriated it for its discourses of instruction in consumption.

Although the result of determinations outside the Exhibition, the return to the display of houses for sale was another important shift for the Exhibition. The purchase of privately owned dwellings was an important aspect of the Exhibition's ideology, and the year that changes in building regulations came about, Ann Temple in particular drew attention to the fact that the house she had furnished represented a house that could be bought. The paternalistic role adopted by both the *Daily Mail* and the Exhibition in giving instruction in consumption was represented as relating to the need to furnish newly built and newly acquired properties, and was delivered through a variety of devices: the furnished houses, journalistic description, and newspaper competitions. The 'House of the Future' was not a house for sale and this in many ways made it look like a model house. It was, however, a particularly effective tool in the legitimisation of consumerism by representing it as the shape of the future.

A further shift took place in 1958 with an adoption of home and women's magazines as furnishers of the houses in the 'Village of Ideal Homes'. This led to a considerable extension of media coverage of the Exhibition. It further naturalised the Exhibition as representing what home making was all about. And it further increased the relation of the Exhibition to advice on consumption. The nature of the advice given to consumers shifts within this period, initially there is a concentration on the goods and items used to furnish the home, but towards the end of the period, to an increasing degree there is advice on colour, and coloured fabrics. The kitchen with its capacity to utilise consumer durables is constantly a focus of interest, but a noticeable shift is also apparent in its visual development. Early on there were signs of resistance to the clinical all-white kitchen, and towards the end of the period the language both visually and on the printed page is of 'pretty' kitchens. Both the shift to employment of women's magazines, and such language about the kitchen are signs of an increasing feminization of the interior of the home. Not only were the women addressed as consumers through the pages of the magazines, and through their higher attendance at the Exhibition, but the nineteen-fifties was a period that located women in the home. As a consequence this is an aspect of the Exhibition's address that will be considered further below<sup>13</sup>.

While the Exhibition functioned in part through the production of models of domestic consumption, it also functioned through spectacle. Functioning in this way as display, some of the Exhibition's exhibits were representations of unrepentant conspicuous consumption. Margaret Sherman's 'Ideal Home Kitchen' was such a display as was the *Ideal Home* magazine's kitchen ten years later. These were represented to the public as the 'ideal', for they represented the very best that was available, and constituted models that visitors could

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<sup>13</sup> See page 250.

only fantasise about. While such displays provided attractions that entertained the visitor they also functioned in the production of desire. There is a view that after the war the Exhibition became more commercial. Such a view understates the situation, not only was the role of the Exhibition profoundly involved in the legitimation of consumption, it constituted an ideological apparatus that actively promoted it.

# REPRESENTATIONS THE OF THE EXHIBITION AND ITS POLITICAL ADDRESS

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### **'An Ideal Home is a Home You Own'** *(GLC Stand 1980)*

Earlier, this discussion has shown that when the *Ideal Home Exhibition* opened after the Second World War the 'Village of Ideal Homes' was restricted in the kind of houses that could be displayed. Initially the dwellings shown were of the type approved by the Labour Government for local authority housing, and were not for private purchase. However, because the houses in the 'Village' were fully furnished, the 'Village', in addition to acting as a display of house designs, constituted a form of instruction, or model, of how to furnish and equip the home. Thus it has been argued, that the Exhibition was both a legitimisation of and instruction in consumption for the home. This chapter is concerned with the fact that subsequently, not only was the home a site of consumption, it was itself an object of consumption, for home ownership was a twentieth century phenomena, which, after the Second World War, many people had yet to embrace. The twentieth century was one of profound and significant change in the pattern of housing tenure in Great Britain and, whilst the most crucial changes took place in the interwar period, there were further important developments following the Second World War. Set in this context, the Exhibition, in addition to being a legitimisation of consumption for the home, was a significant representation and legitimisation of consumption of the home. It was thus an intervention into the politics of housing tenure.

Prior to the First World War ninety per cent of British households rented their accommodation from private landlords: within seventy years this figure collapsed to eight per cent. In the same period owner-occupation rose from ten per cent to sixty-five per cent with the majority of the balance of the population (twenty-four per cent) living in publicly

rented accommodation provided by local authorities<sup>1</sup>. One of the consequences of these changes is that for most of the period during which the *Ideal Home Exhibition* had been taking place housing tenure had also been in the process of undergoing change. At the beginning of the Exhibition period few people owned their own homes and the relevance of the Exhibition was with home making in the interior of a dwelling owned by someone else. Within two decades of the end of the Second World War, the Exhibition addressed a situation where the majority of households were owner-occupiers. Although the percentage of the population that came to be owner-occupiers was high when compared with other countries, it was not abnormally high. What was particularly unusual about the British situation was the speed of the change that took place. Whilst the Exhibition cannot be shown to have played any significant role in influencing the shift towards home ownership, it will nevertheless have played a part in naturalising owner-occupation through the ideology of private ownership which constituted the basis of its representations. Furthermore this major shift in housing tenure constituted an important context for the staging of the Exhibition itself, not least because the statistics show that the catchment area of the Exhibition was one where the incidence of change to owner-occupancy was high. A consequence of this shift was that as housing tenure changed during the course of the century, what was socially signified by owner-occupation and other forms of tenure also changed. This change in social signification was further accompanied by various forms of tenure being associated with political ideologies, debates and interpretations.

On the Right of the debate Saunders argues ‘... that ownership of private property tends to undermine support for socialist politics and collective solutions to social questions ...’ (Saunders 1990: 16). He considers that far from workers having ‘nothing to lose but their chains’ as Marx had said, many have considerable capital assets in the form of housing which he believes to be of important political significance. Because wealthy countries like Switzerland do not have a high incidence of owner-occupation, Saunders argues that wealth

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<sup>1</sup> The ratio of ninety per cent private rental and ten per cent owner occupancy is an estimate and according to Saunders (1990: 14) there are no completely reliable figures for owner-occupation until a question on the subject was included in the 1961 census. There is, however, broad agreement on the figures, for example Ball (1983), Berry (1974), Daunton (1987) and Saunders (1990).

alone does not explain its extent in Great Britain. He notes that owner-occupation is high in English speaking countries and suggests that cultural factors are included among the causes of this: 'among them is probably the emphasis on individualism which is in some ways peculiar to English history' (Saunders 1990: 19). However, Daunton argues: 'Owner-occupation did not emerge as the result of a natural desire for property. It can only be understood in the context of a housing market which was biased in certain ways by Government policy' (Daunton 1987: 79). There are thus two main issues concerned with housing tenure that relate to the *Ideal Home Exhibition*: first, the changes that took place; and second, the political and ideological meanings that these changes generated.

Whilst the consequence of the changes that took place in housing tenure was a dramatic increase in owner-occupation, the cause did not begin with an increased desire for private ownership, rather it was brought about by the demise of the privately rented sector. Just before the outbreak of the First World War the profitability of privately rented accommodation was in a cyclical downturn. According to Daunton it was the response of the Government to the situation created by the First World War that 'converted the cyclical downturn into a permanent structural change ...' (Daunton 1987: 26). Rents were frozen by Act of Parliament in 1915 and after the war it would have required a rise of thirty-five per cent to restore rents to their former value. The Government was reluctant to do this and the rise of rents was limited to ten per cent. Though other countries introduced rent controls during the war, what was different about the way the situation was handled in Great Britain was 'the unusual slowness and incompleteness of decontrol, and the failure to provide any compensation ...' (Daunton 1987: 28). Daunton argues that private landlords were sacrificed as a way of dealing with the problems created by the war, even though this entailed a degree of public provision. Landlords were for the most part drawn from the lower middle class, and as they were not as large a group as those who depended on the rental accommodation for housing they were therefore less politically significant, especially since they were not organised in any way. Further, since they were 'considered to be a morally repugnant form of capitalist', their interests could more justifiably be sacrificed (Daunton 1987: 31).

Although these factors explain the beginnings of the demise of the privately rented sector, they do not explain the rise of owner-occupation. An impetus to this was given by the 1919 Housing (Additional Powers) Act which provided a lump sum for houses completed before the end of 1920, and the 1923 Housing Act which encouraged private building through the provision of substantial subsidies. In addition, Berry argues that an important factor was the situation of building societies at the end of the First World War. With the high wartime interest rates and reduced demand, building societies, had been able to increase their funds and as a result they were in a favourable position to enlarge their operations. The interwar period was the great period of building society expansion, 'Over the interwar period the societies' total investment grew by more than 13 per cent each year on average, and even the depression years failed to halt this growth' (Berry 1974: 126). An added factor was the Depression which resulted in a large pool of cheap labour. The interwar period was also one when, for the first time, both dwelling and furniture could be bought by instalments. Because they were able to meet the criteria required by the building societies, owner-occupation became very much the province of the middle class with fifty-three per cent being owner-occupiers by the time of the Second World War. With the change in the pattern of housing tenure that developed after the First World War and in particular with the significant proportion of the middle class shifting to owner-occupation, private ownership developed as a signifier that connoted class and consequently developed a political significance that related to ideology, as well as to the economics involved in public and private provision.

After the Second World War an important shift in the nature of owner-occupancy took place in that there was a significant increase in the number of working class households that became owner-occupiers. This increase formed part of a continued, though less dramatic, rise in the number of households in owner-occupation. From the perspective of the *Ideal Home Exhibition*, the postwar period was one when home ownership was embraced by the majority of the population to include all social classes. In 1955, the



Conservatives promised to create 'a property owning democracy', and housing itself became an object of popular mass consumption.

The continuation in the rise in owner-occupancy did not recommence until the postwar Labour Government was replaced by the Conservatives because of Labour's restriction of private building in their attempt to meet housing need through public provision. Although there was a difference of political outlook, there was a general consensus after the war about mixed provision even if there was a difference in emphasis. The Conservative Governments of the interwar period and of the immediate postwar period were not hostile, like the Thatcher administration, to council housing though they were more in favour of owner occupation than Labour. With the problem of dealing with postwar housing shortages the Conservatives simply wanted houses built by whoever would undertake the task and initially, between 1952-6, raised subsidies for council houses. As a result more council houses were built under the Conservatives than under Labour, but there was a reduction in building standards to achieve their targets. The Conservatives' emphasis was on a mixed market, with a renewal of owner-occupation, and between 1954-7 the Conservatives provided guarantees for building society advances in excess of the normal proportion of the valuation of a property.

The main factor that led to the continued increase in owner-occupation after the Second World War was the further demise of the privately rented sector. The 1957 Rent Act, which decontrolled rents on vacant properties and on those above a certain rateable value, and which also caused other rents to be increased between fifty and seventy-five per cent, was significant in fostering the decline of the rented sector. This Act, far from stimulating the provision of privately rented accommodation, as was intended, resulted in substantial rent increases (and the harassment of tenants by some landlords) as it was used to gain possession and realise capital.

The fact that the postwar period was one of relative prosperity was important for the increase in owner-occupation; it would not have been possible for landlords to realise

capital if the market was not there and, in this regard, the major role played by building societies was equally important. The sale of housing stock by landlords led to houses going out of the privately rented sector and mostly into owner-occupancy. Berry says the 1957 Act increased this switch 'dramatically by perhaps as many as a hundred thousand per year ...' (Berry 1974: 130). Ball states that: 'In the first two decades after the Second World War ... more houses were transferred from the privately rented sector than were built for owner occupation ...' (Ball 1983: 102). Berry says that the main reason for the shift towards owner-occupancy in the light of the reduction in the rented sector was the lack of an alternative to private purchase, 'that buying is so often the only way to get a house at all' (Berry 1974: 129). He supports this with evidence that not all owner-occupiers were so by choice, and refers to a 1964 survey which claimed that sixteen per cent of respondents moving outside London stated they would have preferred to rent. Berry further draws attention to the fact that not all owner-occupied dwellings were ideal homes, stating that in 1971 of all the houses designated as unfit, twenty-eight per cent were owner-occupied (Berry 1974: 135). Berry is clearly aware of the disadvantages that may have been involved unlike Saunders who, admittedly writing at a later date, argues polemically in favour of the Thatcherite drive for private ownership. Despite his reservations Berry says that: 'The dramatic rise of home ownership which took place between the wars and which continued, though less spectacularly since 1945, has brought comfortable modern housing within the reach of a large section of the population' (Berry 1974: 141). The implication for the *Ideal Home Exhibition* of this shift in tenure was that, of those who visited the Exhibition a significantly greater proportion of visitors compared with those before the War would be either new home owners or aspiring home owners, bringing with them the needs and interests of those who had to either purchase or furnish a home.

A further implication for the Exhibition was the broadening of the class base of owner-occupiers and therefore a greater representation of that group across the social spectrum of those attending the Exhibition. For although the rise in owner-occupancy after the Second World War was a continuation of a trend of the interwar period, what was new, and what

represents a significant shift, was the adoption of owner-occupation as a pattern of tenure by the working class. Saunders in particular draws attention to this:

In this postwar period, home ownership has spread from the middle class to large sections of the working class. ... all non-manual grades are today overwhelmingly to be found in the owner-occupied sector, but a majority of skilled manual workers too now own their own homes, and even one in three unskilled manual workers own or are buying their housing. What this means is that over the last forty years, the basic tenure division between owners and council tenants has come to cut across familiar lines of social class cleavage. ... it is no longer true (if ever it was) that the middle class owns and the working class rents, for the 20 per cent of working-class households who owned before the war have now been boosted to at least 50 per cent (Saunders 1990: 15).

Saunders' figures include more recent decades than the immediate postwar period discussed in this thesis. Consequently they reflect the results of the Thatcher Government's 'Right to buy' drive to sell council housing. Despite the postwar shift towards working class owner occupation, Berry says he 'calculated in 1964 that the purchase of a *new or modern house* was within the reach of not more than 40% of all householders', and at the time owner-occupation was only a possibility for the 'better-off' working class (Berry 1974:141 (emphasis not in original)). However, although Margaret Thatcher's policy had a considerable impact later in increasing the number of working-class owner-occupiers (reflected in Saunders' figures), the popular reception of this policy shows that the ideology was already in place. The earlier period after the war represents the period when this shift began to take place.

While writers like Dunton argue that the shift to owner-occupancy was the result of purely economic forces, others see political causes and consequences. On the Right Saunders emphasises the benefits of private ownership as an investment as an attraction to home ownership. Daunton says that both the Right and the building society movement 'tend to portray owner-occupancy as the expression of a natural and ingrained desire' (Daunton 1987:71). Even though the Right tend to portray owner-occupancy as natural and the Left tend to query this, Dunton says that since its rise after the First World War there has been agreement on both the Left and the Right 'that housing tenure has a

significant effect on attitudes and expectations' - the debate has therefore been whether these effects were desirable. He continues:

'The man who has something to protect and improve - a stake of some sort in the country - naturally turns his thoughts in the direction of sane ordered, and perforce economical government. The thrifty man', claimed Harold Bellman of the Building Societies Association, 'is seldom or never an extremist agitator. To him revolution is an anathema.' This is a view with which Conservative leaders from Neville Chamberlain to Margaret Thatcher have agreed. The argument would be that through the wide diffusion of small amounts of property in society, the political attitudes of owner-occupiers could be changed without any alteration of their position in the labour market or productive process (Daunton 1987:70).

Consequent upon the view that owner-occupation might facilitate the moulding of political opinions and the shaping of social attitudes, and even that a fragmentation of the working class might be achieved by giving workers a 'stake in the system'; there is a debate about the degree to which owner-occupancy was the simple outcome of economic and historical factors as Dunton suggests, or to what extent owner-occupation was encouraged by those in power. The 'ramparts-strategy' associated with Avner Offer argues that the Marquis of Salisbury considered that the best way to protect large landowners from Liberal attack was through the creation of a rampart of small owners whose interests would be likewise threatened. As a consequence of the development of this strategy, owner-occupation was viewed in a similar way. This, it is claimed, explains the ideological appeal of increased owner-occupancy to the Conservative Party. As an advocate of home ownership being the outcome of natural desire, Saunders rejects any such theory of political control through housing when he writes:

... critics of mass home ownership have tried to explain its evident popularity by suggesting that people's wants and preferences have in some way been manipulated by powerful groups. Many Marxist critics down the years have argued, for example, that 'the ruling class' has deliberately fostered home ownership so as to incorporate working people more securely into the bourgeois order. There is, however, no evidence for this. Indeed, for most of the period under discussion, neither governments nor anybody else appears to have pursued a coherent long-term tenure strategy. As with so many other historical transformations, the home ownership revolution was intended by no one (Saunders 1990: 56).

Daunton considers that it would be difficult to show in a simple and direct way that the Conservatives, through an acceptance of the 'ramparts-strategy', deliberately adopted policies that manipulatively produced the growth of owner-occupation. He sees this growth

as much more the consequence of their abandonment of the private landlord. Nevertheless, in the period with which this thesis is concerned, the Conservatives, even if they were not then ideologically opposed to council housing, were certainly pro home-ownership; they had introduced measures that supported the role of building societies in both 1954 and 1959, as well as making their 1955 promise regarding the creation of a 'property-owning democracy'. They provided a political climate that was favourable to owner-occupiers, and private purchasers received a degree of financial assistance from Government policy - for being permitted to avoid tax on mortgage interest payments was effectively a subsidy. Whatever the origins of the Right being particularly favourably disposed towards owner-occupancy, the *Ideal Home Exhibition*, however coincidentally, was an intervention in the major shift of housing tenure that took place during the twentieth century. As a consequence, it has also constituted an intervention in the politics of housing, and through its representations it functioned as an ideological apparatus naturalising and legitimising owner-occupation.

The Exhibition promoted home ownership in a number of ways, there were direct statements in the Catalogues; it was a form of mediation for private enterprise building firms; and the 'Village of Ideal Homes' was effectively a model of owner-occupation as an ideal. The Exhibition's advocacy of owner-occupancy can be seen as early as 1950, at a time when the Labour Government was still using building licences to ensure that council housing was the main source of provision. The Catalogue description of 'The Village of Ideal Homes' stated, 'These are all houses that can be bought or built for those who have the good fortune to hold both a building licence and determination to possess their own hearth' (Exhibition Catalogue 1950: 99). The linking of 'good fortune' with 'determination' and 'possession' is a statement that is both powerful and ideological. The Davis Estates' entry described their house as being 'designed to meet the needs of those who prefer to possess a home of their own ...' (Exhibition Catalogue 1950: 109). Each year from then on there were references to home-ownership and within a few years it was the norm of the representations. In 1952 the Catalogue spoke of the 'newly increased hopes of those who would rather be owners of their domiciles than tenants'(Exhibition

Catalogue 1952: 87). The initial lifting of licence restrictions in 1953 resulted in representations of houses for private purchase such as the 'Davis House', described in the previous chapter. This lifting of restrictions was strongly equated in the Catalogue with a restoration of freedom, for not only did the description of the houses in the 'Village', quoted in relation to the 'Davis House', talk of the 'freedom that was returned to us', the *Foreword* to the Catalogue was couched in similar terms when it said that several of the houses 'illustrate the new freedom for the moderate family house which came with the birth of this year ...' (Exhibition Catalogue 1953: 15). 'Freedom' it hardly needs to be said is an important connotive value for the Right.

Perhaps the most overt promotion of private purchase was the introduction of a new section in the Exhibition Catalogues in 1959 entitled 'Where to Live'. This section, which in the first instance occupied ten pages, was headed: 'Selecting a House - factors governing Locality - Influence of Age, Employment and size of Family - Estates within an hour or more rail journey from town'. Although the article began with a discussion of a number of general issues, the last half was a description of the places around London and the Home Counties - though the Midlands, the South Coast and other places further afield did get mentioned - where new privately built estates were being erected. The article referred specifically to the builders by name, together with the general location of their developments referring to: Wimpy, McLean, McManus, and New Ideal Homesteads and a number of others. The clear advocacy of private purchase by the Exhibition was quite explicitly stated in the 1961 edition of this section, which had now grown to a fifteen page supplement, which said: 'Fundamentally it would be easy to prove that in providing a house for one's family it is more economic to buy than to rent. Once this fact is accepted then one has to decide what proportion of one's income it is' (Exhibition Catalogue 1961: 99). The implication of this section is that building firms were doing more than using the 'Village of Ideal Homes' as a show case for their house designs, they were using the Exhibition and its Catalogue as an advertising opportunity for their estate developments in various parts of the country. The houses in the 'Village' became not just a representation of a specific design but of the builders and their developments.

The financial burden involved in a house purchase was acknowledged in the Exhibition Catalogue when it stated that young married people had to begin to make provision to purchase a house 'years before' they could actually initiate a purchase; and that they 'may have to wait some years before they reach the income bracket which would enable them to contemplate buying a house'. Yet in a House of Commons debate in 1961, Sir Keith Joseph claimed that many people living in council houses could afford to buy homes of their own. He gave figures obtained from two building societies which showed that nearly half the people who were buying their own homes were earning less than £15 per week and more than three quarters were earning less than £1,000 a year. An example of the postwar shift towards the purchase of houses by those in lower income brackets (to which Saunders has been keen to draw attention) can be seen in the 1955 'Lawdon House' where the visitor was informed that: 'The low initial 10 per cent deposit of £240 combined with easy monthly instalments brings this within the reach of those who have not been able to afford a house of their own so far.' It was the smallest house in the range and was described as being 'specially designed to meet the needs of the younger generation, but it is equally suitable for all' (Exhibition Catalogue 1955: 99). Another example was the low cost Unity exhibit of 1958 called the £1,000 'Traditional House' - a price which excluded the cost of the land. As with other Unity products it was designed with local authorities in mind, in addition to private development (Exhibition Catalogue 1958: 69 & 85).

The rise in owner-occupation can be seen as, in part, the result of the Conservative Government's policies that had put their faith in private enterprise and the 1957 Rent Act. Burnett comments that the effect of this was that:

By the end of the decade, however, it was clear that a new housing crisis was looming. In particular, much publicity was given to the growing problem of homelessness, the increasing scarcity of rented accommodation and the insecurity of tenants in London and other large cities. Behind the 'affluent society' still lay much private squalor in the housing conditions of lower-paid workers, immigrant groups, old people and others who had not been in a position to press their claims on national prosperity (Burnett 1986: 286).

In a debate in the House of Commons in 1961, the Labour opposition made the charge that house purchase was only for the wealthy. But in replying to the debate the Minister, Mr. Brooke, attributed part of the problem to a shortage of land (*Daily Mail* 21 March 1961). The Exhibition Catalogues do make a couple of references to this suggestion: 'the shortage of land caused by the density of our population' (Exhibition Catalogue 1962: 11) and 'land prices can be expected to spiral upwards with a consequent need for ever more homes on an ever diminishing amount of land' (Exhibition Catalogue 1962: 92). However, the crisis of which Burnett speaks is not in any way apparent in the Exhibition Catalogues. Indeed, with the increased number of houses exhibited, and the increasingly opulent nature of some of them, the impression is rather of the 'affluent society' to which Burnett refers.

Given the *Ideal Home Exhibition's* affinity with the notion of the 'ideal home' as an owner-occupied house, it is somewhat surprising to find that flats, including designs for local authority provision featured among its exhibits. Despite the Dudley Committee's accommodation of flats in its Report in order to meet the densities required by Abercrombie, flats did not, as Pleydell-Bouverie made clear, constitute the popular ideal. Flats appeared to offer a solution to local authorities with housing problems, including those occasioned by slum clearance. However, flats were also a significant commercial opportunity for the larger building firms, and it is this fact that explains their appearance in the Exhibition. Just as the design values of the Exhibition were driven by the commercial interests of the exhibitors so, despite the ideology of owner-occupancy, the representations of the Exhibition were driven by the commercial interests of the building firms. Nevertheless, so strongly was the suburban house fixed as a signifier of the Exhibition's housing form, that the Exhibition is not associated with flats. Indeed, interestingly, Michael Carter, notwithstanding his long association with the Exhibition, responded negatively when asked if the Exhibition had included flats. In part this may be due to the fact that although local authority flats were part of the Exhibition's representations, the constraints on the way flats were exhibited meant that they did not significantly undermine the Exhibition's implicit ideology of owner-occupancy.



Flats were first exhibited in 1953 and in the next two successive years, and then again in 1957. With the exception of 1961, when something of a feature was made of flats, they were not exhibited again in the period under examination. The first flats shown, in 1953, by Laing, were not the high-rise form that has constituted the most controversial aspect of postwar public housing provision, they were a two-storey development, each flat having a garden. In 1954 Unity Structures, who had previously specialised in one and two-storey buildings, exhibited a three-storey building. This exhibit marks their move towards building taller blocks of flats (Exhibition Catalogue 1954: 55). Unity also exhibited flats in 1955 and 1957. The 1955 exhibit was again a three-storey building but the Catalogue describes them as suitable not only for a development of any length, but also capable of being built into a ten-storey block. In other words, they were a modular design that could be developed as either a slab-sided block or a tower block. It was suggested that they would be 'of particular interest to Local Authorities undertaking slum clearance programmes' (Exhibition Catalogue 1955: 99). Burnett comments that by 1954, the Government believed that the housing shortage was on the way to being solved. By changing the benefit to be gained from subsidies, the 1954 Housing Repairs and Rent Act shifted the economic interest to slum clearance. This was further accentuated two years later when subsidies for general needs were completely abolished (Burnett 1986: 286). Exempted from this abolition were one bedroomed dwellings, and the Unity exhibit for 1957 was for one and two bedroomed flats. This may explain why access to the one bedroom flat was restricted to representatives of local authorities although the public were invited to view the two bedroom flat (Exhibition Catalogue 1957:78). The Exhibition was therefore involved in the politics of housing in the sense that through it Unity were able to promote their product to local authorities.

These exhibits by Unity at the Exhibition suggest that part at least of their design policy was aimed at deriving benefit from whatever subsidies were being made available by the Government. Patrick Wright indeed argues that it was subsidies that encouraged high-rise development, because, he says, Macmillan introduced a subsidy for blocks with a



Illustration 33 (above): View of the 'Village' in 1957. The House in the foreground is the 'Berg Winchester House'. It was furnished by Jeanne Heal as the 'Woman's Hour House'. The furnishing was done on the basis of responses sent in by listeners answering a questionnaire printed in the *Radio Times*. In the event, Heal had to make her own decisions because similar numbers made contradictory suggestions. Beyond that is the 'Crouch Convertible House' and in the background are the three storey flats by Unity.

Illustration 34: View of the opposite side of the 1957 Village. In the foreground is the Davis House offered as a prize by Michael Miles in his television Programme *Take Your Pick*. Beyond is the 'Frostproof House' exhibited by the Ministry of Housing and Local Government. The flats by Unity are visible in the top right corner.



progressive increment for each storey from the fourth to the sixth floor and a fixed increment for each storey above that. Wright says, the high-rise development was designed to harvest subsidies (Wright 1991: 79). Unity appear to have found the Exhibition an effective form of promotion to local authorities as their 1955 entry states:

Unity ... decided at the last Ideal Home Exhibition to show a three-storey, two bedroom flat. The success of this enterprise was very much greater than the sponsors anticipated - many Local Authorities accepted this type immediately, many more followed their example later in the year. This enthusiastic reception has encouraged Unity to show at this Exhibition another two-bedroom flat of pleasing design (Exhibition Catalogue 1955: 99).

Although their 1955 exhibit could be developed into a large slab-sided building or tower-block the way it appeared in the Exhibition gave no impression of this kind of scale nor of the problems that might result from living in such a building. As Illustrations 33 and 34 show the exhibit appeared on a very similar scale to the dwellings exhibited for private purchase. Furthermore as the exhibit had a pitched roof it appeared to be a similar kind of building to the others in the 'Village'. Viewed in the context of the Exhibition, with its examples of suburban housing alongside, the Unity flats were represented as examples of an 'ideal home' little different from the private enterprise representations. The controversy that was later to surround tower-blocks and similar developments had yet to emerge and these dwellings, though they could be developed as large vertical or horizontal blocks of flats, were shown in a way that represented them as small scale buildings and placed in the context of owner-occupied private enterprise buildings so that they appeared more closely approximated to the 'suburban ideal'. The scale of the exhibits was obviously determined by the size of the exhibition hall at Olympia and the logistics of construction, but in this way built forms used for mass publicly provided housing were represented in an Exhibition that espoused notions of private and individualised housing in a manner that appeared entirely consistent with these values.

In 1961 flats were made into a feature of the Exhibition. The displays were not about issues derived from the problems of housing, or the commercial interests of a firm like Unity: they were about lifestyle and interior display. In addition to a display of flats in the 'Village of Ideal Homes' there were two contrasting exhibits of interior display rooms: the

'Daily Mail Economy Rooms', and the opulent 'Daily Mail Penthouse Rooms'. Though the economy rooms were designed with modest budgets in mind, they were intended to represent the rooms of those who were well-off with cultural capital if not actual money at that point in their lives, as the newspaper put it, who have 'more taste than money' (*Daily Mail* 16 March 1961:6). The Catalogue description stated that, 'One-room living has become an accepted mode of modern life', and the display offered 'solutions to the problem of furnishing a room on a limited budget' (Exhibition Catalogue 1961:14). The display showed rooms furnished and decorated on budgets of £50, £75 and £100 respectively. The three 'occupants', two singles and a couple, were all envisaged as young and starting out in life, rather than in long term difficulty.

The Catalogue entry that described the 'The Daily Mail Penthouse Rooms' began by saying that London was changing with new buildings 'rising 18, 25, 35 storeys' providing views that offered 'new perspectives on old landmarks'. The entry then continued:

So far only a fortunate few are able to live so high above the noise and congestion of the streets; but the magnificent panoramas from their windows will in due course, create a more general demand. To live in a high tower may well be the rage in ten years time (Exhibition Catalogue 1961: 10).

There was no hint here of the condemnation that was later to accompany high-rise developments, rather they were depicted as a privilege of the 'fortunate' for which there may be a 'more general demand' when it becomes all 'the rage'. The Penthouse rooms were envisaged as a luxury provision for wealthy professional people. One room was designed to reflect the taste of an imaginary man who had 'lived' some years in the Far East. In this way antique screens and paintings from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were combined with modern Japanese ornaments, as were Eastern silks, English velvets, Scandinavian light fittings and cutlery, not to mention the Frank Lloyd Wright design on the sofa and chairs. Another of the three rooms reflected the 'feminine' tastes of someone who might be a 'Fashion Editress whose parties are the talk of the town'. The decor of the three apartments in general was summed up as showing that they 'evidently belonged to people with money to spare ...' (Exhibition Catalogue 1961: 10 &11).

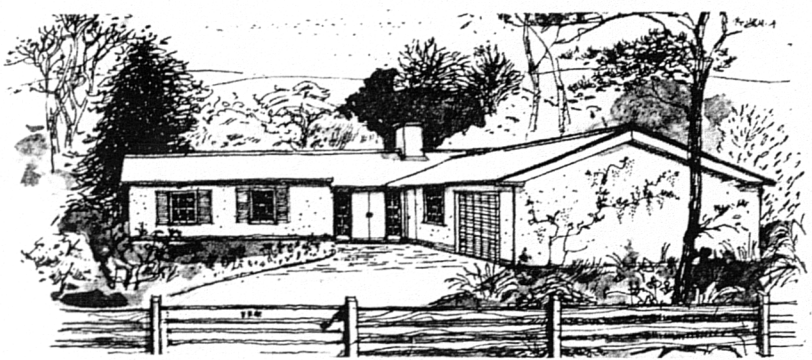
Although the Exhibition displayed the commercially designed dwellings of building developers aimed at those who required public housing, its own exhibits represented the 'ideal home' as the product of considerable wealth and luxury.

In the same year as the Penthouse display, flats were also exhibited in the 'Village of Ideal Homes' by the firm Ideal Homesteads. These were two storey buildings described as 'luxury' dwellings and were for the private purchase of owner-occupiers. These flats were furnished by the magazine *'Woman & Home'* who stated in the Catalogue that they decided to accept furnishing the flats because first, flats were not an English form of abode and second, because in time more and more people were likely to be living in flats. While flats were considered un-English, being seen as dwellings to which the Scots and Continentals were accustomed, they were owner-occupier dwellings and were thus an expression of the Exhibition's ideology. The entry also claimed that there were three groups for whom flats were proving particularly appropriate: older couples whose families had left home; the 'up and coming young pair - he works in town and needs to be near a railway station; perhaps they cannot find a freehold house in their chosen area that is centrally heated within their means'; and the bachelor or 'career girl who wants the joy of her own home and a spare bed where she can pop a girl friend on a foggy night to save her a long and icy journey home' (Exhibition Catalogue 1961: 91). Thus in the 1961 Exhibition, with these flats, the Economy rooms, and the Penthouse exhibits on display, flats did not signify public provision, but the private accommodation of people with particular lifestyle requirements.

Luxury dwellings very much constituted an aspect of the 'ideal' represented by the Exhibition. With the Penthouse flats this was signified in the Exhibition by the opulent furnishings. In the 'Village of Ideal Homes' affluence was indicated by the scale of the dwellings exhibited. Through the choice of the individual exhibitors the 'Village' could represent dwellings aimed at different sections of the market, at the lower end, the Unity £1,000 'Traditional House' and the 1955 'Lawdon House' have already been mentioned. In stark contrast to these were such houses as the 1959 'Crouch House'. This was a four

Illustration 35: Plan and illustration of the 1961 'Berg Ranch House' bungalow as shown in the *Daily Mail Book of House Plans* for that year.

**EXHIBITED AT THE DAILY MAIL IDEAL HOME EXHIBITION 1961**



### The Berg Ranch House

THE Ranch House is an eight apartment property planned on American lines, and one or more of the four bedrooms could be used as reception rooms according to requirements.

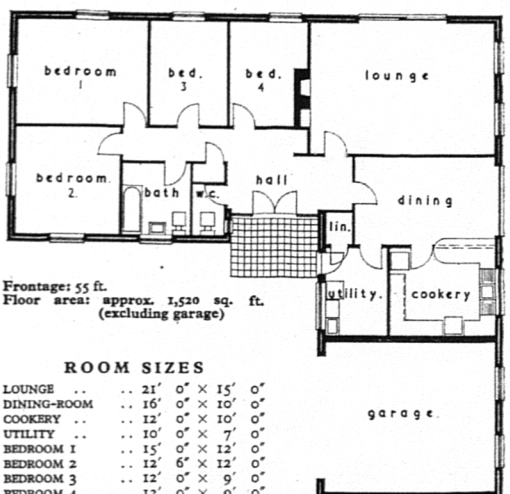
The most popular feature of American planning is the cookery and adjoining dining area, with separate utility for laundry and household goods. The cookery is large enough to be built separately if preferred, but the open plan with wide counter for meals or extra work top is an invaluable asset for young families. A venetian blind between the ceiling and the counter can be used for extra privacy in the dining portion if required.

The design incorporates a porch which houses both the main and tradesmen's entrances.

A double garage provides accommodation, not only for cars, but for bicycles, gardening equipment and pram.

Part central heating, which is included in the price, is supplied by a Potterton Gas Boiler and four radiators.

Several sites are available on Berg's country estates at Liphook in Hampshire, and Willowhayne, Angmering in Sussex, where the Ranch House could be built. Price (excluding land)—£5,450.



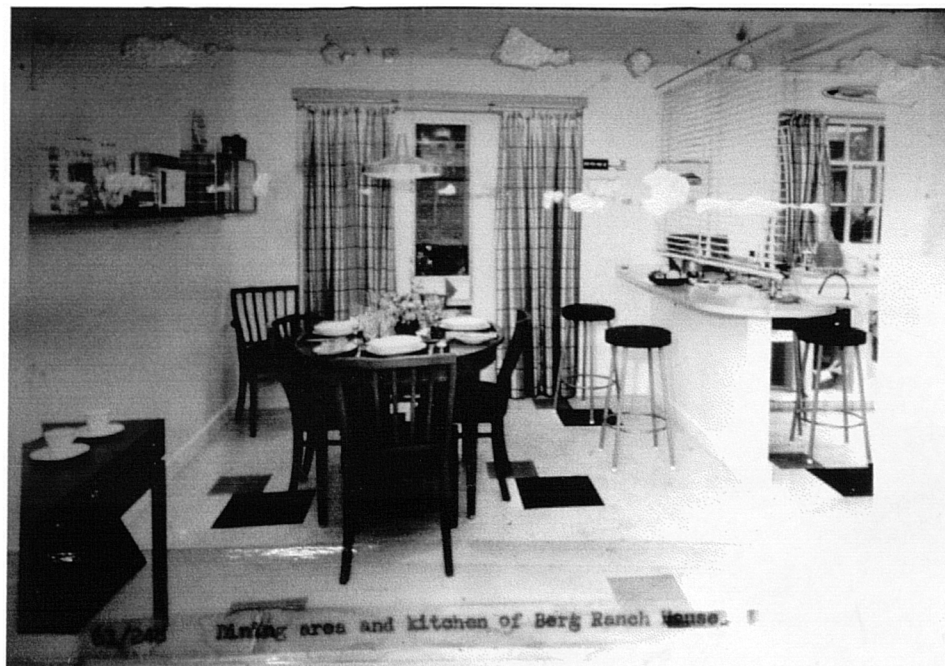
Frontage: 55 ft.  
Floor area: approx. 1,520 sq. ft. (excluding garage)

ROOM SIZES	
LOUNGE ..	.. 21' 0" x 15' 0"
DINING-ROOM ..	.. 16' 0" x 10' 0"
COOKERY ..	.. 12' 0" x 10' 0"
UTILITY ..	.. 10' 0" x 7' 0"
BEDROOM 1 ..	.. 15' 0" x 12' 0"
BEDROOM 2 ..	.. 12' 6" x 12' 0"
BEDROOM 3 ..	.. 12' 0" x 9' 0"
BEDROOM 4 ..	.. 12' 0" x 9' 0"

BUILDERS—E. & L. Berg, Ltd., Buckland House, Esher, Surrey.

page 105

Illustration 36: Dining area and kitchen of the 1961 'Berg Ranch House' bungalow.



bedroomed house which was described as being designed for 'the higher salaried man' (Exhibition Catalogue 1959: 57). The 'Crouch Houses', for the remainder of the period, were all four bedroom dwellings. While other houses might not have had as many bedrooms, they could equally be at the upper end of the market, the three bedroomed 1961 'Davis House', for example, had a master bedroom of eighteen feet by eleven feet, along with other substantially proportioned rooms. With a double garage and four bedrooms and a floor area of 1,520 square feet, the 1961 'Berg Ranch House' was not of modest proportions either (Illustrations 35 & 36). The 'All American House' shown the previous year was of similar dimensions to the Berg exhibit. The effect of the various different buildings being exhibited alongside each other in the 'Village of Ideal Homes' was to draw attention to their differences of scale. This was particularly the case towards the end of the period considered here, when restrictions had been lifted, shortages ended, and the economy was buoyant. While even some of the more modest dwellings might have been something that visitors would have longed for, the 'Village' represented the 'ideal home' as a dwelling of significant and luxurious scale.

Reference has been made throughout this discussion to a number of building firms who exhibited in the 'Village of Ideal Homes' and Figure 11 provides in tabular form details of when they exhibited and also of the type of dwelling shown. Three firms, Berg, Davis, and Unity were there practically every year. Crouch claimed to have exhibited at the show since 1932, but the Catalogues indicate that they did not return after the war until 1955. Other firms seem to fit what Lewis termed a floating population. What the table shows, particularly with the arrival of Hallmark at the Exhibition, was an increase in the number of bungalows on display in the latter part of the period. While some of these bungalows could be of luxurious proportions, like the 'Berg Ranch House' and the 'All American House', many of them provided the more modest dwellings exhibited in the 'Village'.

Excluding the postwar 'prefabs', bungalows were first exhibited at the 1951 Exhibition. Four were exhibited in the ten years prior to 1958, and twice that number in the five years that followed. The first bungalow exhibited was by Berg, and was the dwelling furnished in

Figure: 11: The firms or buildings represented at the Exhibition

Year	Number Houses	Davis	Laing	Wates	Lovell	Tarren	Aluminium Ho.
1947	6	Berg					
1948	5	Berg	Laing			Hawksley	
1949	5	Berg	Laing			Hawksley	
1950	5	Berg	Coates			New Zealand	
1951	6	Berg	Coates	Wates			
1952	6	Berg	Coates				
1953	6	Berg	Coates				
1954	4	Berg	Laing				
1955	8	2 Berg	Laing				
1956	7	Berg		N.I.H.Ltc B		Lawdon	S, N.&Co.
1957	7	2 Berg		N.I.H.Ltd B	Hallmark B	Future	
1958	9	2 Berg				Frostproof	Canada
1959	7	2 Berg	Laing (OAP) F	Wates	Hallmark B	Round House	Roof House
1960	8	Berg			Hallmark B		
1961	7	Berg		N.I.H.Ltc B	Hallmark B	Canada	All America
1962	10	Berg	Ministry	N.I.H. Ltd	Hallmark B	McLean	
				N.I.H. Ltd.	Hallmark B	McLean	America Ln. B
							Norwegiar

B = Bungalow

F = Flats

M = Maisonnettes

N.I.H. Ltd. = New Ideal Homesteads Ltd.

S, N.&Co. = Select, Nichols & Co. Ltd.



Contemporary Style by Collie Knox, referred to in Chapter Six. The next was in 1955 by New Ideal Homesteads, and the description referred to bungalows being 'more 'popular' and said they were 'an attractive answer to providing a spacious home at low cost' (Exhibition Catalogue 1955: 94). The next year, 1956, Hallmark and New Ideal Homesteads both exhibited. Though absent in 1957, again two bungalows were shown in 1958 by Hallmark and Berg. The latter described their building as 'a most attractive contemporary design', and went on to refer to the estate in Waterlooville where their buildings were available for purchase. The prices ranged from £1,550 to £2,495, which may be compared with detached houses by Berg which ranged from £3,095 to £4,220 (Exhibition Catalogue 1958: 72-3). The estate was represented as being 'really healthy and exclusive' in 'beautiful country surroundings', and in a similar vein an estate in Basingstoke was said to be 'in healthy rural surroundings' picking up associations that had become attached to bungalows before the war. Three bungalows were exhibited in 1960 and the Catalogue description of the 'Village' attributed what it considered to be a 'trend' to the increased proportion of middle-aged people and the decline in family size (Exhibition Catalogue 1960: 13). Although locations around the country are mentioned, advertisements and sections like 'Where to Live' suggest that locations near the sea or in areas like the Chilterns were particularly favoured. Some advertisements like the 1960 Hallmark also associated the bungalow with 'sunshine and health' (Exhibition Catalogue 1960: 89), again repeating the interwar signification of bungalows. Following the First World War there had been what has been described as an outbreak of 'bungalow mania'. Originating in the colonial experience of India, by the end of the nineteenth century bungalows, sometimes on quite a substantial scale, developed as country or seaside summer or weekend residences. According to King (1984) one of the most important factors contributing to the boom in the growth of bungalows was that they formed part of the shift from rented accommodation to owner-occupation. This shift was, in part, promoted by the subsidies made available shortly after the war from which bungalow construction also benefited. A number of economic factors like land prices, materials and construction methods made them cheaper to build, and their growth was also aided by the development of the motor car and the railways. Ideologically their location allowed them to

be inserted into the current hegemonic discourses of health, fresh air, the countryside, and the 'garden city'. They were particularly attractive to building firms, the vast majority of whom employed less than ten men, because they were easy to construct and, unlike the 'semi', only required one purchaser. They could therefore be afforded by the poorer of the middle classes and provided a cheap entry into property ownership. They were a private enterprise form that facilitated owner-occupation and though they were adopted by the lower middle class they were able to retain something of the significance of the weekend or summer residence of the better-off. A number of the firms who exhibited at the *Ideal Home Exhibition* listed bungalows among the designs on offer, and those that were lower priced continued to provide an entry into the property market. Bungalows were attractive to those approaching old age because of the lack of stairs and their association with attractive locations, and ideas of health and well being. As a consequence of the economic determinants involved in the original popularity, the bungalow was specifically a private enterprise constructed owner-occupied housing form. Bungalows could be a modest 'ideal home' but as owner-occupied dwellings, they were very much part of the ideology of the Exhibition.

In mediating houses to the public as 'ideal homes' for owner-occupation, the Exhibition was not simply a representation of the external appearance of the dwelling, the fully furnished show homes of the 'Village' enabled visitors to inspect the dwelling as a place to live in. At least one Catalogue entry suggested that by the end of the period considered here, buyers were 'more concerned with the interior' because they demanded 'a great degree of flexibility' in the design of the interior layout (Exhibition Catalogue 1961: 12). While the wartime discussions of the requirements of postwar housing, like the Dudley Report and Pleydell-Bouverie, included such considerations as the space standards required by areas like the bedroom, it was the relation between the living, eating and cooking areas that were the least settled. The 'Unity House' of 1951 provided a dining-kitchen with a serving hatch to the living-room. The kitchen was large enough for a family of four to eat in when they did not wish to use the living-room. Local authority provision, of which this would have been an example, was determined by standards stipulated in

housing manuals which were in turn based on the Dudley Report. Later, in 1954, Unity designed a dining area continuous with the living-room. Although the family were expected to breakfast in the kitchen, it was envisaged that they would eat an evening meal in the dining area. It was a space that could be extended into the main living space 'on gala occasions', it was also connected to the kitchen by a serving hatch. Again in 1957 the 'Unity House' showed a move away from designating the kitchen as an eating area, the Catalogue described the kitchen as 'large enough for the occasional meal'.

Various attempts were made in the explicitly private dwellings exhibited to solve the relation between the requirements of living, cooking and eating. For the most part recommendations about the provision of a utility-room were ignored to save on building costs. The different arrangements, and sometimes the way they were described, show that changing domestic patterns and lifestyle requirements had to be taken into the account. The language style of the firms' Catalogue entries was not basic objective description but was laden with the adjectives of sales copy. The entry for the 1952 'Berg House' shows both the commercial form of description with details of how they attempted to relate the different spaces. They described their house as providing a 'spacious lounge' that 'leads to an adequate dining space which adjoins the breakfast nook and large kitchen, facilitating the easy service of meals with the minimum of work and walking.' The description designated breakfast as an informal meal that required an informal space which therefore contrasted with the formal space provided for dining. This informal approach to some meals was increased in the two later 'Berg Houses', of 1956 and 1957, which were provided with an even more informal breakfast bar. A similar distinction was to be found in the 'Davis House' of 1952, where the breakfast nook was 'an alcove forming part of the kitchen, the units have been so designed to form a partition between the two, and also providing a serving hatch with a double-sided cupboard incorporated for china.' A later 'Davis House' 1954, had a kitchen that was 'of ample size and large enough to permit meals being partaken in comfort'. This suggests that informality is not indicated by reducing the size of the space but through designation achieved by separation. The separation that distinguished the formal dining-room was created by 'a built in china



Illustration 37: Interior of the 1957 'Crouch Convertible House', showing how the rooms could be opened up into one large space.

cabinet that incorporates a serving hatch.’ In the same year Berg also provided ample space for meals to be consumed in the kitchen which had a built-in breakfast nook with folding table and seats for 4 or 5 persons. It was described as providing alternative facilities for hasty, informal or occasional meals. For the formal meals there was a dining recess described as generous in area and conveniently situated for easy service from the kitchen.

These exhibits show the different and changing attempts to define the relation of the formal and informal eating spaces and the other spaces in the home. With some of them costs and the need to save space were an important consideration. In tandem with this, the provision of two eating spaces, formal and informal, signified the luxury of more prestigious dwellings. This signifying role arises from the incorporation into the built form, of the changing domestic and social situation caused by commuting and the daily attendance of children at school. Thus on the one hand there was a requirement for food to be prepared and consumed easily as part of the daily routine: on the other hand space was required that contributed to signifying the symbolism of the formal meal. One particular house that witnessed the different, changing and conflicting requirements of cost and space and the separations of space was the ‘Crouch Convertible House’ of 1957 (Illustration 37). The house was described as having:

... a convertible plan which allows the ground floor to be either open or closed by means of double doors between the hall and lounge, the triple doors between the lounge and the dining room and the special unit dividing the kitchen from the dining room.

...

In particular, a novel feature in the kitchen is the special fitment provided as standard which can be opened as a flap table suitable for occasional meals or closed to separate the kitchen from the dining room, if so desired (Exhibition Catalogue 1957: 80).

One of the design features used to solve some of the problems of the relation between the dining and cooking areas was the provision of a serving hatch. This feature appeared in both dwellings designed for local authority provision and those for purchase by owner-occupiers. An examination of the plans of the ‘Davis House’ (Illustration 19) shows how

the hatch enabled access between the kitchen and dining area where the provision of a door would have been difficult. It thus allowed the architect to economise on space.

Having been provided, the serving hatch did allow for a symbolic separation of roles and spaces where the meal was a formal occasion. June Park discussed the relation of the kitchen to the dining area in a book published in 1958 advising people on having a house designed by an architect. Here the organisation of the various spaces and the provision of a serving hatch is related to the availability of domestic help.

Certainly, if you do not want to hear the noise of dishes being washed while you are having dinner, the kitchen would need to be completely cut off, probably without even a hatch, or you would not be able to hear yourselves talk. Here the problem of domestic help arises, and the kind of help will influence the plan. Most houses have to be run without any help at times and that has to be considered. A hatch between the dining-space and the kitchen with two-way cupboards and even drawers is very convenient and may be preferable to a door (Park 1958: 31).

While Park's text suggests she saw the serving hatch as a device to deal with the absence of servants<sup>2</sup>, enabling the negotiation of the housewife's role as hostess with that of her domestic labour, its provision was functional, in that it allowed the architect greater scope to save space. The serving hatch was thus a practical feature that could function in a symbolic way.

Editorial comments and individual entries in the Catalogues identified four areas of development so far as the interior of the home was concerned: flexibility of design, large windows, frost-proof plumbing / improved insulation, and central heating. The exhibits suggested a real concern about frost-proofing in the immediate postwar period but, generally speaking, the term 'frost-proof' was little used after 1958 when three of the house descriptions referred to it. Instead information about insulation methods or quality replaced the term together with an increase in the references to central heating.

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<sup>2</sup> Regarding servants, of all the entries in the Catalogues only two refer to servants. In 1951 Don Iddon, the *Daily Mail* writer based in New York, responsible for furnishing the 'Coates House' said, 'The third bedroom could also be used as a maid's room or nursery'. In 1957 the specially designed 'Daily Mail House' imagined a wife who had the help of 'a daily woman'. This contrasts with some of the pre-war exhibits where accommodation was provided in the house for servants.

One of the forms of flexible interior layout was open-plan. The development of design features like open-plan and large windows, interlocks with developments in heating and insulation. Open-plan room arrangements require adequate heating, and to be economic that requires adequate insulation. The Parker Morris Report noted that open-plan arrangements were disliked by local authorities for their houses, but that in private enterprise housing it was 'popular with purchasers' as it 'gave a sense of space' (*Homes for Today and Tomorrow* 1961: 9). Open-plan design could provide building economies; make a reduced space provision look larger; and provide a flexibility of arrangement. It was disliked by local authorities because it provided little privacy and failed to protect different members of the household from the noise and distractions created by others in the family. Nevertheless, again during the latter part of the period under examination, open-planning, as a private enterprise feature, was frequently to be seen in the Exhibition.

Open-plan was associated with the desire to have rooms that were 'spacious', and one striking feature of the Catalogue descriptions of the houses in the 'Village of Ideal Homes' was the frequency of use of this word. It was first encountered in 1951 when it was used by Coats to describe the bedroom. For about the next six years the word was used in a variety of ways once or twice in each annual Catalogue, but its use developed, relating it specifically to the living and reception areas. From 1958 onwards the word was used in twenty-two of thirty-one house descriptions, sometimes more than once in the same description. Although the use continued to be identified with the living and reception spaces, its use also developed as a more general description of the house. Examples of which were: 'open plan with spacious rooms' (Wates 1958); 'a spacious "through" room with generous windows' (Davis 1959); the house 'offers the spaciousness and elegance of the past with the best in modern planning, materials and appliances' (Berg 1962: 76). 'Spacious' had two contrary applications. It could be used to imply that a small dwelling was roomy: alternatively it could be used to draw attention to the sizeable spaces offered by large dwellings where it was a signifier of wealth and status - as Ravetz notes, 'more money buys more space' (Ravetz 1995:151).

Together with the term 'spacious' other words and their variants were used that connoted value, namely 'elegance', 'luxury', and 'gracious'. Their occurrence in the Catalogue descriptions was rare until 1958. Although texts do occur where they were used together, they are insufficient to act as evidence to make a *direct* connection between the use of 'spacious' with 'elegance', 'gracious' or 'luxury', but there was an overall pattern of an increase in the frequency of these terms.

It was noted earlier that towards the end of the period under consideration, houses of a significant and luxurious scale began to be featured as one aspect of the representations of the 'Village of Ideal Homes'. Coinciding with this there was a development in the language used to describe exhibits that placed an emphasis on the internal 'spaciousness' of the dwelling and also on its qualities of elegance. This change further coincided with the adoption of open-plan arrangements for dwellings intended for owner-occupiers. While scale and space were essentially among the most common signifiers of status and wealth, the evidence seems to suggest that, following the earlier period of reconstruction and the restriction on total building size, the late fifties saw their re-emergence as signifiers in the commercial production of postwar builders. Thus while housing statistics showed the rise in the degree of postwar owner-occupancy, the Exhibition revealed the commercial re-emergence and rise of dwellings of social status within the home purchase market.

The address of the Exhibition was essentially ideological in its promotion of home-ownership and purchase as an ideal. At the same time as the Exhibition was established, a major change took place in housing tenure that resulted in the majority of people in this country becoming owner-occupiers. Since the Second World War this change has further shifted to embrace sections of the working class, and the Exhibition can legitimately be viewed as an intervention into these changes. Agreement that owner-occupancy has political implications can be found on both the Left and the Right but those on the Right have, in particular, been eager to claim it as indicative of their values. Though the majority of the Exhibition's representations were of the individual house, flats, including those for local authority provision were also exhibited, as the ultimate determinant was the



commercial interest of the exhibitor. Bungalows, which were a private enterprise form, were also displayed in the 'Village of Ideal Homes' particularly towards the end of the period. Their design and location positioned them as suitable for retirement, but they also allowed some entry into property ownership. Though bungalows could be of a modest scale they could be opulent. Thus while one facet of the 'ideal home' was of an owner-occupied dwelling however modest, another facet of the 'ideal' was of an opulence beyond the reach of all but a privileged few, and the creation of desire was partly promoted through this aspect of the Exhibition's address. One of the significant roles of the 'Village of Ideal Homes' was that it was a display of the interior as well as the exterior of the home. The representation made in the 'Village' revealed changes in the patterns of consumption of domestic space. The changing requirements for the preparation and consumption of food were already under consideration during the war. This related to changes in heating and cooking equipment, whereas during the postwar period there was a search for flexibility in the arrangement of domestic space, which was more a reflection of lifestyle requirements. With improvements in heating and insulation, open-plan developed as one form adopted for private enterprise dwellings where space, like scale, was mobilised as a signifier of affluence.



Illustration 38: View of the 'Village of Beginning Again' in 1947. The temporary single-storey prefabricated 'Aluminium House' is in the foreground.

Illustration 39: In contrast with the scarcity evident in 1947 was the main spectacle of the 1958 'Golden Jubilee' Exhibition when a recreation of the Palace of Fontainebleau was displayed. The interior was furnished with loans from the National Trust.



## CHAPTER EIGHT

### ‘An Englishman’s Home ...’

As a commercially driven event, the ‘*Ideal Home Exhibition*’ addressed its public with representations and messages that promoted consumption in the domestic realm. It was imbued with an ideology of home-ownership, and values of domestic consumption were located within a presumption that owner-occupancy was the ‘ideal’. The argument of this chapter is that these consumerist values were situated by the Exhibition in an address which articulated its political ideologies of nationalism, class and gender.

Illustration 38 depicts the Grand Hall of Olympia when the *Ideal Home Exhibition* reopened in 1947. It is an image that contrasts in a number of ways with both previous and later Exhibitions. The most apparent contrast is the obvious austerity of the decor. The Illustration shows the relatively simple stands, part of the modest structure of an officially approved prefab, and a simple mural in the background as decoration. *The Builder* described this Exhibition saying: ‘the stands flanking this (the main avenue) have the unusual feature of a floral cornice where daffodils, primulas, and other spring flowers are set in boxes’<sup>1</sup> (*The Builder* 14 March 1947: 249). This Exhibition, where flowers replaced display materials made precious by war time shortages, was a far cry from the sumptuous pre-war displays such as the Exhibition of 1936 when:

... a scheme was adopted that excluded all daylight from the building by covering the inside of the vast glass dome with immense stretches of velveteen the colour of which varied from light blue at the lower edges to black at the zenith. Around the walls appeared the outline of a modern city in silhouette, while in the obscurity above stars shone and twinkled. The Grand Hall, huge as it is, seemed to have been expanded to the proportions of outdoors by this original treatment, which earned for its setting the name of “The City of Beautiful Night” (*Exhibition Catalogue* 1958: 56).

As increasing prosperity replaced the austerity of the immediate postwar period, the Exhibition was able to return to its tradition of spectacle. Within ten years, as has been

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<sup>1</sup> The flowers were daffodils, ceinerarias primulas, and blush-hued cyclamen (*Daily Mail* 4 March 1947: 1).

mentioned previously, the author of an article in the *Daily Mail* borrowed from the Barnham Brothers to describe the opening of the 1958 *Ideal Home Exhibition* as ‘The Greatest Show on Earth’ (*Daily Mail* 3 March 1958: 10). This was Golden Jubilee year for the Exhibition and the Catalogue claimed that ‘the Organisers have spared neither expense, time nor ingenuity to devise and design an Exhibition worthy of the great occasion’ (Exhibition Catalogue 1958: 63). As a stunt to advertise the Exhibition a golden road leading to the Exhibition was created. Headed ‘GOLDEN ROAD leads today to GOLDEN SHOW’ the newspaper described how the road had been painted gold ‘...from the Hammersmith road down Addison road to Olympia’s main entrance’ (*Daily Mail* 3 March 1958: 1).

For the Golden Jubilee’s interior spectacle the organisers choose the setting of the Palace of Fontainebleau (Illustration 39), and as part of the spectacle Napoleon’s own dining-room was brought over from that palace even though this required a decree to be passed through the French Parliament. The two wings that represented the palace in the show were decorated with loans from the National Trust. In keeping with the French theme a contemporary ‘French’ dining-room was also constructed. It seems likely that it was the theme of gold, of opulence, of quality and of elegance that lay behind these decisions, and Stanley Peters, described as ‘one of Britain’s leading interior designers’, was reported as saying, ‘This year the Exhibition is better than ever. So very elegant’ (*Daily Mail* 4 March 1958: 4).

A similar approach was adopted in 1961 and the *Daily Mail* described how:

An ordinary London turning next to a railway line alongside Olympia will be transformed today ... into the golden, starlit gateway to the million-pound plus Daily Mail Ideal Home Exhibition.

Tonight six huge stars will twinkle over the entrance to a six star show bringing the heart of springtime to the heart of London.

Springtime is the theme of a show that more than 1,000,000 people will see between opening day tomorrow and March 30 (*Daily Mail* 2 March 1961:1).



Illustration 40 (above): Close-up of the decorative mural of the opening of the 1947 Exhibition. Note the label 'For You' on the box of goods, also the goods themselves in the background of the general view above. Note also the references both to 'equality' of the sexes, and to factory, office and mines.



Illustration 41 (right): The idea of 'An Englishman's home is his castle' was combined with a romantic representation of the age of chivalry in the spectacle of 1956 Exhibition.

The description of the 1961 decorations seems even more spectacular. An immense display of fountains reaching virtually the complete height of the hall and combining, through the activity of three 'water pianists', music and coloured lights. This was set in the mouth of a vast grotto at the west end of the hall. The fountains were the biggest ever seen indoors and required fifteen thousand individual jets of water (Exhibition Catalogue 1961: 6; and *Daily Mail* 6 March 1961:14). On the same page as this description, the Catalogue made the claim that it was the quality of the show that acted as an attraction to the exhibitors, 'Only in the Daily Mail Ideal Home Exhibition could so many famous firms be brought together to show you all that is best in beauty, comfort and efficiency for your "ideal home".'

The Exhibition set out to use spectacle to entertain and attract its audience and, through the extravagance of its displays, claimed on more than one occasion to be 'the greatest show on earth'. However, it was not just an absence of extravagance of display that distinguishes the 1947 Exhibition from the later ones. A closer examination of the mural that decorated the Grand Hall reveals other and important differences between what is represented in the mural and the way subsequent Exhibitions developed. Illustration 40 shows an enlargement of the central section of the mural, and details which would have been clear to the visitor but are not easily visible in the current photographic album emerge. Above the slogan 'Extra effort now - Prosperity later', a woman dressed in dungarees and a man can be seen working together on the production of goods labelled 'for you'. In the background can be seen symbols of a factory and a mine, as well as some of the goods which will become available through collaborative effort. With the exception of consumption, the image represents a number of values, that had developed in the nation during Second World War but which were rejected or omitted by the representations of subsequent Exhibitions, as they reflected the social values of the postwar period and its own ideological position. The image suggests gender equality and places the woman in the production process; the image is democratic and indicative of a collaborative effort in which class plays no part; the mine and the factory are represented

positively and it is the rural that is absent. The image is unique among the representations of the Exhibition. It shows what values the Exhibition could have espoused, and provides a point of contrast from which to consider in what ways the Exhibition represented different ideologies and to ask how they are to be understood.

Perhaps it is not un-coincidental that it was the 1952 Exhibition of the first postwar Conservative Government, whose election represented a shift from wartime consensus, which provided a clear expression of one of the fundamental ideas that informed a number of representations made by the Exhibition over the next decade. The 'Village of Ideal Homes' was described in the Catalogue which said:

... a village green that enshrines in reality the traditional Centre of England - the very pillar that for 600 years has been held to mark the compass point for a circle that would touch all the land-tips of our English map.

... we claim it to portray a typical heart-of-England village that might have grown bit by bit in many decades. But it is less haphazard (Exhibition Catalogue 1952: 87).

The pillar referred to was the stone monument from Meriden in Warwickshire which was said to mark the centre point of the nation. What the Exhibition did on a significant number of occasions was to construct representations of Englishness from a varied repertoire of signifiers. It was Englishness that was the common theme; and it was specifically Englishness rather than Britishness that the Exhibition invoked (it treated the terms as synonymous), a traditional Englishness rooted in a specific, partial, and populist reading of national history. The choice of these themes was not that of the exhibitors, it was quite specifically that of the organisers, beginning with the proposals of the Exhibition Organiser and his designers which were then taken to the Board of Associated Newspapers for their approval and modification. It was their view and ideology of Englishness that the Exhibition represented for the consumption of its visiting public.

The 1952 Exhibition, by changing 'centre' to 'heart', created an interplay of signifieds that brought together nation and home so that the one signified the other. The heart of

England was not just a point on a map, it was a 'heart-of-England village', it was 'true' or 'real' England. The real stone monument from Meriden was taken from its location to act as a signifier in a constructed exhibit produced to signify 'real' England, the actual centre became a sign of meaning and identity rather than of a specific place. Other signifiers were also used to create this construct. There was in the village a typical English pub, which the *Daily Mail* described, in words that emphasised that Englishness was connoted by signifiers of tradition and the 'Olde Worlde', as '... indeed an ideal village pub, with its oak fittings, old pistols, and its hundred-year-old porcelain beer pulls. ...' (*Daily Mail* 4 March 1952: 6). Thus 'real' England was typified by the English village, the ideal place of home. The further and linked notion of England as home was expressly articulated by the Foreword of the Catalogue which began: 'For ever resurgent, like the seas around our island, is the home life of the nation.' There was, according to Raymond Williams, from about 1880 'a marked development of the ideas of England as 'home', in that special sense in which home is a memory and an ideal' (Williams 1973: 281). This was an identification that has continued up to the present time for, in her Sixth Reith Lecture, Marina Warner argued that the relation constructed between the conception of 'home' as nation and 'home' as hearth, continues to be involved in the struggle to define identity.

At the heart of Romantic nationalism lies the interdependency of home, identity, heritage and women - and this mythology of the hearth continues to flourish in the present nationalistic revival.

....

Could there be another way of talking about home, without harking back to nostalgic lies about the hearth, the throne, the greensward, the island race? (Warner Radio Four 2 March 1994 published as Warner 1994: 86 & 92).

This linking of 'home' as nation and 'home' as hearth were made directly in King George V's words, which have been used as the inscribed motto for every subsequent Exhibition: 'The Foundations of the National Glory are set in the homes of the people.' This text did more than link nation and hearth, it articulated the ideology that lay behind the promotion of the show. Not only were home and nation linked, they were linked by *the*



*King's* words. It was a particular understanding of nation that was being promoted. The ideology was not only about hearth and nation, it was about the relation of subject and monarch. The 1952 Foreword, referred to above, continued in the next sentence to develop the theme of monarchy. In the Exhibition monarchy was an important and recurrent theme which linked with concepts and definitions of Englishness. (Monarchy was also in its own right an aspect of the Exhibition's ideology and mediation and that aspect will therefore be discussed more fully below.) Regarding the linking between monarchy and Englishness, the Foreword stated:

For ever resurgent, like the seas around our island, is the home life of the nation.

Through gay times and anxious alike in four completed reigns that force or instinct has been given springtime expression at this display in Olympia.

And now appearing in due season for the 29th time, is an apt motive for the first great public exhibition of the new reign of the young Queen and the dawn of Britain's second Elizabethan reign (Exhibition Catalogue 1952: 7).

The idea of a new Elizabethan age was represented at the Exhibition by a display of portraits of great figures from the first Elizabethan age in six rooms of the Empire Hall. These were copies of famous paintings of these figures, the first portrait, that of Elizabeth I, for example, was reproduced from the original by Guillim Stretes. Although the reason for the display was the association of the two Elizabethan reigns, the theme of Englishness was powerfully represented not only in the choice of portraits, but also in the language in which this exhibit was described in the *Daily Mail*: 'Beds of Tudor roses grow on each side of the approach to her presence carrying us past her to the corridor where the heroes wait'. The somewhat astonishing use of the term 'presence' for a reproduction of a painting was continued; 'Their eyes rarely meet ours ... (they) are set on vistas above and beyond ours.' The first of these 'heroes' was Sir Francis Drake: 'His is an English face despite the neat pointed beard.' The next sentence of the newspaper article's description of Drake continued with the most extraordinary attempt to associate the glories of the past with those of the near present: '... the moustache is startling. It is the very same as that cultivated by the men who flew the little planes in the Battle of Britain against an armada of a very different kind.' Englishness here was more than partly defined by victorious

combat. (The armed forces, it may be noted, were frequently represented at the Exhibition including this year.) The portraits of 'the men of action' faced those of the 'men of letters', and of Martin Frobisher the article said: '... but in the eyes is the combative courage that produced one of the greatest captains the Navy has known.' Among the 'heroes' were Raleigh, Sir Philip Sydney, Bacon, and 'the greatest of them all' an effigy of 'Will' Shakespeare, in whose hand was a scroll which read: ' Now all the youth of England are on fire, And silken dalliance in the wardrobe lies.' The implication was that this passage applied to the present day for all these portraits, which had begun with 'Gloriana' led up to a picture of the second Elizabeth, whose coronation was to take place the following year, which would, it was hoped, thus initiate a new Elizabethan age and perhaps an era of new 'heroes' (*Daily Mail* 4 March 1952: 6).

The same phrase, 'The heart of England', which was used for the 'Village' was used again by the *Daily Mail* heading the article by the organiser C.E. Popple announcing the 1959 Exhibition. What is remarkable about the quotation below is the number of signifiers of Englishness that were brought into play. (The article is also a clear example of how 'British' was simply another word for 'English'.)

This year the Daily Mail Ideal Home Exhibition is thoroughly British. We are proud of this. We believe that Britain has some of the loveliest countryside in the world, some of the finest homes in the world, and has produced some of the world's greatest achievements, So we are flying our own flag - high indeed.

First of all there is the sight of the Grand Hall, the splendid spectacle which each year sets the theme of the whole Exhibition. This year it is designed by my deputy organiser, Mr Trevor Smith.

It is called the heart of England; and is set just there in the Cotswolds. We have tried to recapture the timeless beauty of a typical Cotswold village with its mellow golden stone and the roses growing around the dormer windows. ...

At the far end of the hall stands an impression of Blenheim Palace with a lighted fountain playing in front of it. Flanking it on one side is the facade of Warwick, one of our oldest and most historic castles.

On the other side are the 'dreaming spires' of Oxford represented by Oriel and All Souls. It only remains to add an impression of a typically English symbol, an old and famous inn, and you have an idea of the picture which awaits you in the Grand Hall.

...

There is nothing more English than a garden and no personality who more epitomises Britain than Sir Winston Churchill. It could not be more appropriate than,

that this year in the Gardens we should have the Marlborough Summer House from Sir Winston's home Chartwell, in Kent.

It is in this pavilion that Sir Winston has spent many of his leisure moments. Along the walls in stone are depicted imaginative scenes from the battles won by Sir Winston's ancestor John Churchill, first Duke of Marlborough. It sets the seal on the Gardens as a whole, which are more beautiful than ever this year....

...

The village is always one of the most popular features of the Exhibition. This year it is 'The Village in Spring' and it has been designed as a complete miniature village (*Daily Mail* 2 March 1959: 6).

The piling up of references: Cotswold countryside, Blenheim Palace, Warwick Castle, Oxford colleges, Sir Winston Churchill, Chartwell, and the Duke of Marlborough; together with the 'successful' British Pavilion from the Brussels World Fair, which was another exhibit at the show, is astonishing. It is reminiscent of Colin Sorensen's essay where he describes Henry Ford's theme park, in which Ford brought together many potent symbols of American 'national genius' that included buildings and articles associated with, among others, the Wright brothers, Edison, Abraham Lincoln and Ford himself. These exhibits in Ford's heritage centre were designed to encourage the capitalist virtues of 'thrift, inventiveness', and 'get-up-and-go self-help' (Sorensen in Vergo 1989: 64-5). It is an ahistorical compilation of potent symbols that has subsequently been made all the more familiar by the development of the 'heritage industry'. However, unlike Sorensen's example where the signifiers were linked by the common theme of 'national genius', by collapsing English geography so that Warwick, Oxford, Blenheim and the Cotswolds could appear in the same panorama, the *Ideal Home Exhibition* mobilised a complex set of significations that brought together a number of different understandings of Englishness. There was Englishness, symbolised by the Cotswold village with its warm mellow stone, of a homely rural landscape. There was Englishness of history, place, architecture and tradition, evoked by the 'dreaming spires' of Oriel College and Warwick Castle. There was the Englishness of stately home and nobility exemplified by Chartwell, Blenheim and the Duke of Marlborough. There was the Englishness of her sons who defended 'this other

Eden, demi-paradise' 'against the envy of less happier lands'<sup>2</sup> epitomised by Winston Churchill continuing the tradition of his ancestor John, Duke of Marlborough, who won the battles now imaginatively depicted in stone. Although the signifiers of the 'Heart of England' Exhibition display were brought into relation to one another in an ahistorical and ageographical way, they were not an amassed collection of real artefacts as was the case with the Ford heritage centre described by Sorensen. Another way, therefore, to read these representations is not as a 'heritage industry' style collapsing of history but analogous to the poetic piling-up of images as exemplified in John of Gaunt's 'scepter'd isle' speech in Shakespeare *Richard II*, from which the quotations above came. With its language of 'This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England ...' the speech would not only have been easily appropriated into the ideology of the *Daily Mail* and the *Ideal Home*, but a particular imperialistic reading of such well known texts no doubt played a part in the formation of that ideology. When referring to this speech in her Reith lecture, Marina Warner remarked how the 'metaphors of heaven, island, fortress and house follow one upon another' and are then followed immediately by references to the 'land as mother' (Warner 1994: 90). In addition to these metaphors noted by Warner were those of Arcadia, and realm. The *Ideal Home Exhibition* drew upon a construction of Englishness which it then represented in its displays as an Englishness of realm, countryside, history, and class which together constituted England as home, an idealised England that was the context of the ideal home. As such it was a very different ideal to that represented in the mural of the opening 1947 Exhibition (Illustrations 38 & 40). England as home was not a new egalitarian land of production and the modern city, but an Arcadian 'old country'.

Even in 1956 when the Smithsons' 'House of the Future' provided an *avante garde* display of the potential for progress in the design of the home, the main display harked back to an England of earlier times. Dominating the Grand Hall was a representation of a

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<sup>2</sup> William Shakespeare, *Richard II* Act 2 scene 1.

castle which had turrets that almost reached the ceiling<sup>3</sup>. The design was intended to create a romantic building which had features drawn from a number of different ages. 'It might have housed the Lady of Shalott or one of Robin Hood's wealthy foes' wrote the organiser in the *Daily Mail* preview (*Daily Mail* 5 March 1956: 6). Knights in armour, lance in hand, seated on prancing horses accompanied the display. Beneath, and adding to the colour and pageantry, were round tents in which jousting knights might have rested. It was intended as a display of grandeur and the conception was carried on into many of the stands. Though the display was designed as a spectacle of colour and grandeur that spoke of the romanticism of an earlier age it also implied the subtext that 'an Englishman's home is his castle' (Illustration 41).

The turn from the mural's unique wartime collective vision of a new built country yet to be born, to a view of England informed by historic tradition and Arcadian vision, must have taken place soon after the reopening of the Exhibition. The immediate postwar reconstruction period was followed by a change in political climate and the themes of the early fifties Exhibitions were determined by the *Festival of Britain* and the accession of Elizabeth II. In 1954 Arcadia itself was the theme of the Exhibition designed by Sir Hugh Casson. Fifty feet above the main aisle in the Grand Hall were models of Apollo in his chariot drawn by eighteen golden flying horses. At the far end receding from the advancing god of the Sun was Diana, goddess of the Moon. At one level this was a representation of resurrection - with the new days of plenty driving out austerity - as articulated in the *Daily Mail's* Exhibition preview heading 'Now, Tomorrow has arrived at last' (*Daily Mail* 2 March 1954: 6). After the hardships of the war the Exhibition showed how life was changing with all the new gadgets that promised to revolutionise domestic life and labour. (Whether this notion of resurrection and renewal linked in anyone's mind with that of a new queen and a new reign, though possible, must remain a matter of speculation.)

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<sup>3</sup> Captions to the photographs in the *Daily Mail* describe the castle as 15th century, but the preview article by the organiser L.E.W Stokes Roberts described it as a fanciful blend of features from different ages (*Daily Mail* 5 March 1956: 6).

The choice of Arcadia was justified in an advertisement for the Exhibition; because Arcadia was the home of the gods it was therefore the 'ideal home of the ancient world' (*Daily Mail* 3 March 1954 3). Although it was not stated, the fact that the Exhibition was held at Olympia cannot have been entirely coincidental in the choice of this theme, particularly as the advertisement continued by suggesting that now its 'modern counterpart' was to be found 'under the great crystal roof of Olympia'. The gardens at this Exhibition provided an appropriate pastoral vision with a Greek temple and cypress trees. Ideas of Spring and with them implicitly the strengthening Sun of Springtime were also suggested in the newspaper preview.

However, for all its references to the ancient world, as Bracewell (1998) has so engagingly shown, 'Arcadia' was also capable of being mobilised as a signifier of an idealised England of the kind described above. Bracewell opens his book's first chapter on 'England as Arcady' with an evocative description of Powell and Pressburger's 1946 propaganda film *A Matter of Life and Death*, in which David Niven played a young pilot of a stricken Lancaster bomber engaging in valedictory radio conversation with a pretty young woman member of the ground crew. Bracewell describes how Niven played a character who embodied all the personal qualities, virtues, and values claimed as the epitome of traditional Englishness. The next scene showed the pilot, whom we presumed to be dead, encountering a pan piping little boy on a dune in an Arcadian heaven - only he was not dead, he had washed up on the shores of England. England was heavenly Arcadia, 'Powell and Pressburger were tapping in to a spirit of Englishness, common enough before World War Two, that gambolled on the sunny meadow of pure idealized pastoral Arcady ...' (Bracewell 1997: 4). This film would have been seen by many of those who visited the Exhibition and would have helped to sustain the conceptual link between ancient Arcadia and the notion of an idealised Arcadian England.



Illustration 42: The gardens of the 1962 Exhibition were a representation of a Tudor village. The theme of the essence of 'real' England was regularly linked to mythic notions of rural and historic England.

Illustration 43: The 'Georgian House' which constituted the main spectacle of the 1960 Exhibition, it combined traditional references with opulent display.



Rutherford says that: ‘... the evocation of an English Arcady was the motive and reward for the *white man’s burden*. The presentation of an idealised England as a motif and reward for the empire builder was a principal narrative structure of Victorian and Edwardian adventure stories. ... The depiction of England as a mother to her sons became a powerful motif in imperialist ideology.’ And an imperialist ideology was very much that of the *Daily Mail*, which wrote: ‘It has always been the *Daily Mail’s* policy to stimulate interest in Empire and foreign affairs ...’ (*Daily Mail* 5 March 1951: 2). This Arcadian view of an idealised England as home was based on a specific selection of images of England that were made to stand for the essence of England. The 1959 theme of ‘the heart of England’, which was itself a way of articulating the idea of the essence of England, was by no means the only occasion on which the Exhibition made actual representations of an idealised English countryside. The Gardens of 1958 were described as: ‘Against the background of a Stately Home a trout stream will thread its way, curving, dipping and rising, through a blend of cool grass and high colour’ (Exhibition Catalogue 1958: 65); or again, in 1962 a Tudor village (Illustration 42) was featured as part of the Gardens:

... visitors will see a group of Tudor houses, timbered and plastered, with quaint characteristic high gables, dormers and overhangs.

In the middle of the crescent made by these small houses there is a church, two oast houses and a barn, all set in perfect harmony of form, all mellow tinted and fringed with tiny gardens typical of Kent and Sussex.

Stretching before these village dwellings there are all the features which make the country hamlet of this country unique.

One sees a charming old haywain close to an oast house, a little stream and a village pond, rustic fences and field gates, small bridges and then in the distance behind these ancient houses a vast landscape of rolling meadowlands bedecked with noble trees (Exhibition Catalogue 1962: 10).

These further representations epitomised a view of England where ‘Rural England had come to represent “real” England’ says Newby, who then continues:

... the Leavisite elision of elitist cultural sensibility and organic rural community allowed an idyllic version of rural life to be elevated to the status of quintessential England and Englishness. When the Few defended the nation in the Battle of Britain it is doubtful whether they conceived of England in terms of engineering factories and municipal gasworks, but rather of church towers, thatched cottages and stooks of corn standing under a threatening harvest sky (Newby 1987: 178).



In creating these representations of 'real England' the organisers were drawing on a view which according to Rutherford (1997: 50) relates, in part, to the desire among the middle classes at the end of the nineteenth century to 'reinvent the English nation in an age of imperialism.' As Southern financial capitalism achieved ascendancy over the declining Northern industrialism, so the contact that these middle classes had with the metropolis made them aware that it was 'rotten at the core'. Both the socialist William Morris and the imperialist Baden-Powell rejected the decadent luxury of the city, with Baden-Powell articulating a vision that 'drew upon the myth of the regenerative powers of rural England. Following on from the Victorians, for whom the village and the countryside were symbols of 'reassurance and continuity', representing 'conservation and stasis' instead of urban migration and change, were a number of Edwardian poets to whom Rutherford refers. They had, he says, an antipathy towards modernity and they created a symbolic geography that constructed England as an Arcadian idyll, Rutherford's description of which almost exactly depicts the representations of the 1962 Exhibition:

...the Edwardians 'rediscovered' rural England as a symbol of the country's unchanging essence. Their discourses of England and Englishness originated in the rural narratives of the 'South Country'; the cottages, meadows, woodlands, and green rolling hills and hedgerows of Kent, Sussex and Surrey. Their literary and imaginative archaeology established England as an 'old country', its origins lost in the myths of time, its last recognisable moments the agrarian 'Merrie England' of Elizabeth 1 (Rutherford 1997: 51).

The idealised view of a 'real' and rural England expressed here and promoted by the Exhibition was, as Bunce (1994) says, 'primarily a landscape of aesthetic'. As a product of the reaction against the urban industrial life it was based both, he says, on real images and cultural abstract values that select contrasts with the industrial city. Although the images of the countryside from which an idealised England was constructed have an inherent beauty, Bunce shows clearly how the English countryside as we see it today is the production of a process of enclosure and gentrification which was involved in the creation of the great landed estates. Though the development of the countryside took place within a framework of agricultural development, 'it was a form of progress constrained by the entrenched hierarchical structure of society, in which agrarian objectives were often

subordinate to the requirements of gentrification' (Bunce 1994: 34). Thus just as Gainsborough's portrait in the National Gallery of *Mr and Mrs Andrews* can be seen as a representation both of the landowners' pride in their property *and* a naturalisation of class relations though the absence of other orders<sup>4</sup>, so the *Ideal Home Exhibition's* evocation of a Arcadian England as the context for the 'ideal home' were representations of home and England as home that not all could hope to enjoy.

Bracewell makes the point that the Arcadian vision of Englishness was of 'a quasi-mystical, historically vague notion of Ye Olde England as a benign rural democracy' (Bracewell 1997: 4). He later continues 'Arcady's first paradox, as a cultural institution within Englishness, is that it became the province and privilege of the rich. ... The translation of Arcady from one mythology to another, by way of an expensive Grand Tour, had entwined its sensibility with landed wealth and intellectual superiority' (Bracewell 1997: 13). Once the constraints on house building imposed by the postwar Labour Government were removed, the 'Village of Ideal Homes' became a visual index of wealth, where large and expensive dwellings stood beside more humble houses and bungalows. This index reached its ultimate expression in the final year examined here, when in 1962 a purpose built second home was exhibited, the 'K-D Vacation House'. This was an 'A' frame structure, marketed by a company associated with Unity, whose products had been aimed at local authority provision. Not only were the houses in the 'Village' of different scales, but the way they were furnished, the budgets envisaged, and the social status implied by their imaginary occupants was a material reflection of class relations. Although the village was called the 'Village of Ideal Homes' one cannot but view some of them as being more ideal than others. If the *Ideal Home Exhibition* articulated an Arcadian England as home then it was not an Arcadia of rural democracy, it was the countryside of stately home, country estate and villages of an ordered stratified society that were part of an imperial realm.

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<sup>4</sup> See for example John Berger 1972: 106.

That the truly ideal home was one of class, and wealth was revealed in the centrepiece of the 1960 Exhibition - the 'Georgian House' (Illustration 43). It was an exhibit which represented tradition, Englishness, wealth, class and status. The 'Georgian House' was described as 'embodying all that was best of one of the most gracious eras' (Exhibition Catalogue 1960: 5).

This year, the Daily Mail Ideal Home Exhibition presents a perfect replica of a Georgian House, approached by a formal drive and set in carefully laid out gardens. Authentic in every detail, it is undoubtedly one of the most impressive features ever presented in the Grand Hall.

... You could have one built for yourself today for approximately £20,000.

It is generally acknowledged that the Georgian House is the most beautiful example of domestic architecture which this country has produced.

... Its design and fittings have been studiously adapted from the best examples of Georgian Houses built around 1720.

... From the outside the "face" of the house has a charm which no other architecture can equal. Notice the perfect symmetry of the windows and the simple and dignified canopy over the front door (Exhibition Catalogue 1960: 6).

The Catalogue suggested that the disadvantages of the original 'Georgian House' lay in the problems of heating and insulation and its lack of modern amenities like cloakrooms and modern kitchens. In modern times these things could be put right. The exhibit was not intended simply as a historic reconstruction, for example there were no servants quarters, it was intended as a 'modern Georgian house'. This meaning of the exhibit was made clear by the way it was furnished for the Exhibition. The house was decorated with items of silver borrowed from the National Trust and other items loaned by the Werher Collection at Luton Hoo, including a Constable in the drawing room and a Reynolds in the master bedroom. But it was not intended to be seen as a small unoccupied stately home, because it was furnished as though it was a house lived in at the present time by an imaginary family. The items with which it was furnished were individual original art objects, not the reproductions or massed produced items to which visitors to the show would have resorted. The imaginary occupants were therefore represented as people of very considerable wealth. The furnishing was undertaken by two television personalities from the highly popular program 'What's My Line', Lady Barnett - 'who lives in a Georgian house' - and Gilbert Harding. Its 'family' were imagined to include 'a daughter studying

ballet' and a boy who was 'mad about space travel' - implying a normality with which visitors to the show could identify. The Catalogue description of the house employed words like: 'handsome', 'spacious', 'graceful', 'noble', and 'dignity'. In addition, a modernised kitchen was placed within the exhibit. It combined modern appliances while still retaining 'a country air.' Thus were combined references to distinction, class, elegance and an Arcadia of the privileged.

The effect of leaving the brick walls in their natural state and a plentiful use of copper utensils and fittings, combine to produce a warm and friendly atmosphere, rather different from the usual streamlined effect to be found in many kitchens today (Exhibition Catalogue 1969: 7).

The 'Georgian House' was presented therefore not only as a fine example of English architectural tradition but also as a contemporary ideal - a truly 'ideal home'. It was an ideal that above all represented the home as a statement of class. It expressed ideas of Englishness and tradition on a grand scale in a way that conferred power, importance and exclusivity. Its meaning was expressed through scale, space, and the elegance that signified expense and quality. The 'Georgian House' was implicitly contrasted with more recent styles and with the 'ordinary' houses that people visiting the show might have owned or hoped to own.

The 'Georgian House' was not the only spectacle to represent class and elegance, nor was Arcadia the only signifier of Englishness. In 1955 an award winning design 'transformed the Grand Hall into the likeness of London during the gay brilliance of Regency days.' The decorations included suspended objects that were described as 'reminiscent of the Royally patronised Battersea Gardens' and opposite the entrance at the end of the hall was a terrace of Regency houses. These contained reconstructions of four 'historically interesting' rooms: Wellington's library, Sheridan's study, Mrs Fitzherbert's drawing-room, and Beau Brummell's dressing room. The choice of Wellington allowed the concept of the victorious combatant again to be introduced into the Exhibition's definition of Englishness: ' ... who finally broke the menace of Napoleon at Waterloo.'

Sheridan's significance was that he contributed a gem of the English language itself. His speech made at Warren Hastings' arraignment was described as being 'treasured as one of the greatest masterpieces of eloquence in our language.' Thus his choice again enabled the Exhibition's lauding of Englishness<sup>5</sup>. Mrs Fitzherbert and Beau Brummell added style and elegance to representations of the 'ideal home' associating it with aristocracy and privilege (Exhibition Catalogue 1955: 12). Along with these rooms, the royal theme of Regency was carried through in the Wedding Pavilion where the Wedding Ball Gown worn by Princess Charlotte, daughter of the Prince Regent, at the ball following her marriage to Prince Leopold of Saxe Coburg in 1816 was displayed.

These representations were far removed from the egalitarian mural of 1947. They provided evidence of the way that class played an important part in the representations of the Exhibition. Class values were expressed not only through the displays of the Exhibition, but through the editorial material published in the *Daily Mail*. This material took the form of newspaper stories that reported visits to the Exhibition of important VIP visitors such as the Lord Mayor of London, members of the aristocracy, ambassadors, foreign dignitaries, and members of the Government, and other dignitaries of various kinds. Often a good deal of editorial space, as well as photographs, was devoted to their visits. It is clear that the newspaper saw their visits as reflecting well on the Exhibition, but in so doing the newspaper affirmed the view that these people were important because of their social status. An example of the way that the editorial material highlighted the visits of important people is the article devoted to the visit paid by Prime Minister Winston Churchill's wife:

Mrs Winston Churchill ... spotted her eldest daughter, Mrs Duncan Sandys, standing among those waiting to view the house.

"Why there's Diana with her father-in-law," she said.

Mrs Churchill went over, chatted with her daughter, then rejoined her party which included Lady Dorothy Macmillan, wife of the Minister of Housing, Mr Ernest Marples, his Parliamentary Secretary, Mr S.F Wilkinson, an Under-Secretary, and Mr J.H. Foreshaw, the chief architect.

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<sup>5</sup> Sheridan's Irish origins were not referred to.

They were received by ...

... At Mr Trufitt's suggestion Mrs. Sandys and her husband's stepfather, Colonel Frederick Lister, were invited to join the party (*Daily Mail* 5 March 1952: 4).

This newspaper story was a full half column in length and occupied the lead position on the page. The remainder of the article continued with a description of visits paid by Mrs Churchill and Lady Dorothy Macmillan to various exhibits. The emphasis was, however, very much on the visitor, as they, or their words, were the subject of the story.

Reading through the sources of the *Ideal Home* gives a strong sense that the Exhibition was in a variety of ways an articulation of class values. In his book *Class in Britain* David Cannadine provides a theoretical approach that sheds light on the different ways issues of class were reflected in the Exhibition. It could also be said, that the Exhibition provided evidence to support the view he proposes. Cannadine argues that a tripartite model rather than a single description is required to understand the history of social structure in this country in recent centuries. His 'model' is based on the observations of a citizen of Montpellier in 1768 who concluded that there was no single description of the town and offered instead 'three very different yet equally plausible accounts of the same contemporary social world.' On this basis Cannadine states that we can best make sense of British society by viewing it as: first, a hierarchical seamless web where each social layer merges into the next; second, as a triadic division of upper, middle and lower collective groups; and third, as dichotomous, where society is sundered between 'us' and 'them' (Cannadine 1998: 19). Cannadine is clear that viewing society in this way does not produce a 'rigorously consistent interpretation of the world', but argues that this approach best holds together and makes sense of the various attempts to analyse society.

The modern 'Georgian House' with its exclusive furnishings; the aristocratic spectacle based on the elegance of the Regency period; Margaret Sherman's 'Ideal Kitchen'<sup>6</sup> were all expressions of a dichotomous view of society divided between the elite and the masses.

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<sup>6</sup> See page 165.

On this view the ideal home was a home of the privileged elite, an exclusive and sumptuous dwelling. However, a visit to the representations in the 'Village of Ideal Homes' would have suggested a view of class and the 'ideal home' as a hierarchy. At the lower end were the dwellings supplied by Unity or the modest bungalow ranging through to some of the bigger houses provided by Crouch, Berg or Davis Estates, with houses of intermediate scale in between. Support for this graded view of society was also provided by the different size budgets £500, £1,000 and so on as examples of how to furnish a dwelling on different incomes. Equally the *Daily Mail* newspaper reports of the visits of the 'great and the good' to the Exhibition were reports of those who were at the top of a layered and ordered society of deference. A triadic view of society which considered people as belonging to either upper, middle or the working class was also reflected in the Exhibition. In many ways the ideology of home ownership as articulated by the Exhibition was of middle class home ownership sandwiched between the unique stately dwellings of the aristocracy and the local authority provision for members of the working class. Despite the exclusive spectacle of the 'Georgian House', in strictly commercial terms the Exhibition was one of middle class suburban ideals, where the ideal home could be bought on one of the newly developed suburban estates, such as were featured in the 'Where to Live' section of the later Exhibition Catalogues. Cannadine's model clarifies the different ways discourses of class relationships were represented in the Exhibition and the editorial material that accompanied it in the *Daily Mail* newspaper. To some extent it could be said that a dichotomous view was to be seen in the sumptuous spectacles of luxury; a hierarchical view in the commercial representations, and in the rhetoric of the newspaper and the Catalogue; and a triadic view in the imaginary families of the displays and the suburban ideology of middle class property ownership.

Cannadine argues that while all three ways of interpreting class relations were existent after the Second World War, the view of society as an ordered and deferential hierarchy was dominant particularly among those of a Conservative outlook:

... They preferred to see society composed of individuals who knew their place, rather than of classes which did not. The ideal images of British society were still pure

Baldwin: the ordered organic countryside, the paternal factory characterised by a partnership between managers and workers, and the church and the Empire. Even as late as 1971, Anthony Sampson could claim that the Conservatives have remained, through all their transformations, associated with the settled, inherited society of the countryside' - by which, of course, he meant belief in hierarchy.

This view of how British society was, and of how it ought to remain, was still extremely popular among ordinary people during the late 1940s, 1950s and early 1960s. As befitted those with a hierarchical and deferential caste of mind, there were many members of the middle and (especially) the working classes who believed in an individualistic and finely graded society. They regarded the monarchy, the Lords, the Empire and the countryside as the visible, institutional embodiment of these social visions and social arrangements (Cannadine 1998: 157).

Thus according to Cannadine during the period with which this thesis is concerned the dominant view of society in the popular mind was the hierarchical one. The quotation also shows how the Arcadian view of 'real' England constituted part of the discourse of class relations. In Britain the ordered ranks of the graded hierarchy began with the Empire and the monarchy. Royal patronage was as important to the Exhibition as it was to the *Daily Mail* and the 1958 Catalogue drew attention to this:

From the very first the Daily Mail Ideal Home Exhibition has been honoured by the favour and keen interest of the Royal Family. As far back as 4th August, 1908, the official announcement was made that "Her Majesty Queen Alexandra has been graciously pleased to grant her patronage to the Ideal Home Exhibition at Olympia".

Since then there has hardly been a year in which the Exhibition has not been visited by members of the Royal Family. Queen Elizabeth II has been honouring the Exhibition with visits since she was very young and at the 1957 Exhibition she attended a private preview with the Duke of Edinburgh on the opening day.

Indeed the famous words of the late King George V: 'The foundations of the National Glory are set in the homes of the people' are to be read at each Exhibition where they are inscribed high above the Grand Hall - the very motto of the Exhibition (Exhibition Catalogue 1958: 56).

Not only was the enjoyment of Royal patronage an expression of the ideological position of the *Daily Mail* and the Exhibition, it was of great commercial significance. Attendance by a Royal did more than signify approval. A number of the newspaper stories were couched in terms of the Royal visitor learning from the Exhibition. On one occasion they might learn about the latest developments in housing that were being provided for their subjects - such stories were always accompanied by some comment of approval made



by the Royal visitor. For example: “‘Easily run homes are what a woman wants’ The Queen observed as she left the last of the homes’ (*Daily Mail*, 3 March 1948: 3). On another occasion they might be described as learning about the latest gadget or piece of labour-saving equipment: stories like these would include some comment of wonder or intention to obtain the item themselves. For example: ‘Said the Princess, “Wonderful.” And before she left she bought a square vegetable grater, an egg whisk, an omelette pan, and a palette knife, an egg separator, a potato chipper, a kitchen saw, a sandwich toaster, and a vegetable chopper’ (*Daily Mail* 9 March 1956: 3)<sup>7</sup>. These stories helped to generate the myth that even those who enjoyed the luxury of palaces could learn or benefit from attending the Exhibition. In so doing the stories placed the Exhibition at the forefront of sources of domestic provision and ideas.

Not only did the Exhibition foster the impression of Royal endorsement, much use was made of Royalty directly in connection with the show in a more general way. For example, the *Daily Mail Ideal Home Book* of 1949-50 had a full page portrait of the King and Queen on its opening page and the first article was entitled ‘Their Majesties at Home’. This described the use and role of various Royal residences like the Royal Lodge, Sandringham and Balmoral. Both the 1948 and 1949 Catalogues had a long article by Louis Wulff on the Royal Family. Wulff began the 1948 article, ‘The Royal Family at Home’, with the prophetic words: ‘First requisite of an ideal home is the family spirit that exists within it. No matter how comfortable the furniture, how modern and efficient the fittings, it will not be a home if the family who dwell within its walls is not happy’ (*Exhibition Catalogue* 1948: 7).. In this way the Exhibition functioned as an ideological state apparatus not only maintaining the establishment position of state institutions, in articles like this it was effectively promoting the Royal Family. Later in the article Wulff wrote:

It is, indeed, this very spirit of the family that makes the Royal Family so dear to us all. It is the example of their home life that sets the pattern and standard for so many

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<sup>7</sup> Description of the visit of Princess Alice, Countess of Athlone.

myriads of other homes of lesser degree throughout the Commonwealth, the knowledge that their home life is so secure and steadfast that wins for them the affection and love, as well as the duty and respect, of their peoples (Exhibition Catalogue 1948: 7).

In the language of modern advertising this was effectively part of a repositioning of the Royal Family. For as Wulff further stated: 'The regard for the King as a family man is something new in the idea of monarchy, as new as the concept of Empire as a family of nations' (Exhibition Catalogue 1948: 8). While the Royal Family was important to the *Daily Mail* as an aspect of the Exhibition which provided both stories for the newspaper and a seal of approval for the Exhibition, it may well be that the Exhibition was also important for the Royal Family. The abdication of Edward VIII caused a considerable crisis for the monarchy, which was already far from popular. After the bombing of Buckingham Palace the Queen is reported to have said, on a visit to the East End, 'My house was bombed too', to which someone called from the crowd 'Which one?' Nevertheless, the monarchy was able to use the Second World War to reposition itself, but it may not have felt as secure in public esteem as it appeared. The *Ideal Home Exhibition* would have provided the kind of identification with the lives, interests, and concerns of the ordinary people that the wartime visits to bombed houses achieved.

If it is the case that the Royals visited the Exhibition partly because of the benefit they derived through being associated with it rather than because of interest in what it stood for, then this may explain the decline in Royal visits in the second half of the nineteen-fifties. A content analysis of the newspaper reports of Royal attendances at the Exhibition shows that there was shift in the pattern of attendance. The patronage of Royal Family in the period immediately after the war was very great and continued through the early and middle fifties. The evidence of the *Daily Mail* reports suggests strongly that Royal support was declining by the end of the decade and with the start of the sixties. In the late fifties visits were by Duchesses, like the Duchess of Gloucester or the Duchess of Kent rather than the leading members of the Royal Family. In 1961 Princess Alexandra was the sole Royal visitor, and there was no reference to a Royal visitor in 1962. Given that attendance

at the Exhibition was at its highest in the late nineteen-fifties, the decline in Royal patronage cannot be explained by being in line with a decline in public interest in the Exhibition, rather the reverse should have obtained.

Conceiving of society as a hierarchy of relationships should involve not only an analysis of social class, but also the relations of gender inequality. Built into the orders of precedence, traditions, and even laws associated with monarchy were very specific gender roles that positioned women in an unequal way. The notion of gender equality implicit in the 1947 mural was nowhere else to be found in the Exhibitions of this period: the opposite being invariably the case. Wulff's article *The Royal Family at Home* referred to above, provided an example of the Exhibition's mediation of the role adopted by the Royals and of how unequal gender relations were naturalised as part of the social hierarchy in such descriptions:

The King and Queen, homelovers themselves, are deeply interested in the homes of their people. They have been inside more of their subjects' homes than any other King and Queen in history. On such occasions no mere superficial inspection will satisfy the Royal visitors, nor do they like to find everything specially arranged and set in apple-pie order. They prefer to look in with little previous notice, to find the housewife busy at her daily tasks, the husband just home from his job, so that they may see things as they are, and not as some official would have them appear. The Queen will ask a score of housewifely questions, discuss the merits of gas-stoves and other kitchen appliances, and sympathise with the difficulties of running a home handicapped by rationing and shortages. The King will talk of the planning and layout of the house, how the heating system works, whether there are draughts, just the kind of question that anyone visiting a friend for the first time will ask...

The Queen really does know about house keeping ... and makes it her own first responsibility, just as other wives do, to see that her husband's home is smoothly run (Exhibition Catalogue 1948: 8).

This passage is redolent with a variety of ideological statements including how the institution of the monarchy functioned to reinforce a specific model of domestic relations. The text reinforces conceptions of the domestic roles of women, designating them 'daily tasks' whereas husbands had 'jobs'. It suggests that there are particular areas of appropriate domestic interest, the 'housewifely' discussion of gas-stoves for women and the weightier 'planning' for men. There is a more subtle distinction in the Queen asking 'questions' of the wife, whereas the King 'talks' to the husband. The former implies a

definite degree of patronage, as opposed to the latter where there is a supposed manly equality of understanding, though not of social status.

The mural of the 1947 Exhibition, that suggested a view of the role of women with an implied equality of relationship, depicted the woman wearing trousered overalls as she laboured on her industrial output. Lisa Tickner shows how the shift away from women wearing trousers after the war was a signifier of their return to a purely domestic role, as paid employment was required to be available for the men of the demobilised troops. Tickner examined this shift through an analysis of the images in *Picture Post* and concluded:

... with the coming of peace, emergency changes were being reversed, and advertisements reflect this process very clearly. Almost all the illustrations of women in trousers during this period are associated with leisure; indeed it would seem that many women bought their first pair of slacks, or first resumed wearing them after the war, on holidays in the later 1940's ... The general impression is of a return to traditional domestic roles (a Russian bride in 1947, living in a prefab in Gospel Oak, is disillusioned because she is 'expected to be a housewife and nothing more') (Tickner 1977: 62).

Thus women who had been working in factories during the war, were now, through the process of demobilisation, 'returned' to the home, and 'encouraged to resume the roles of wife and mother with a new fervour and enthusiasm as part of their patriotic duty in the "battle for peace"' (Partington in Attfield & Kirkham (eds.) 1989: 206). The *Ideal Home Exhibition* image was later than those examined by Tickner, and is interesting in its continuing representation of women in an active productive role, however its very lateness helps to explain why no further positive images were to be found in the Exhibition.

Although the 1947 Grand Hall mural was intended as a representation of reconstruction through the development of peace-time production, it was essentially a reflection of women's experiences during the war. The Dudley Committee foresaw that this experience would lead to women demanding higher standards in the home after the war:

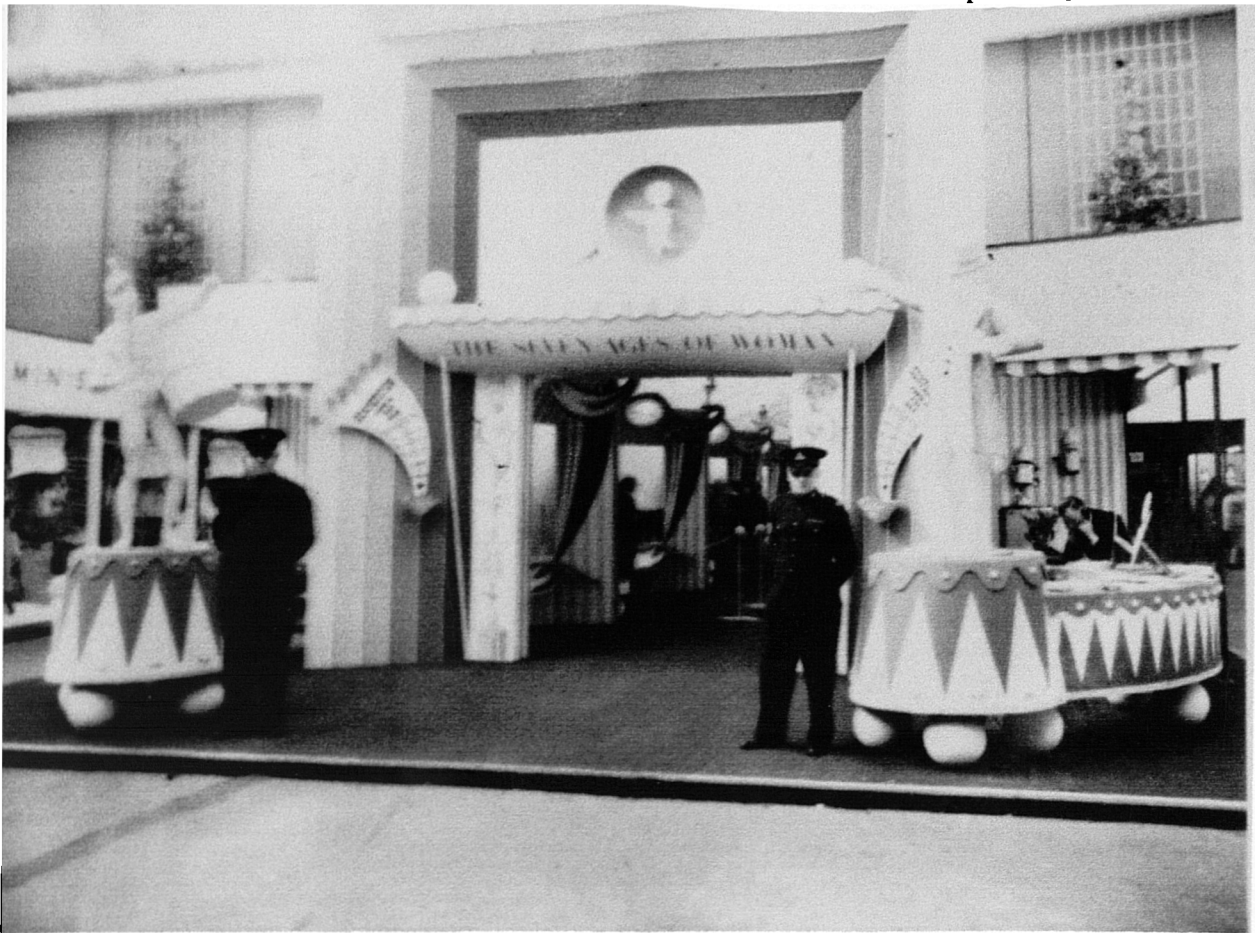
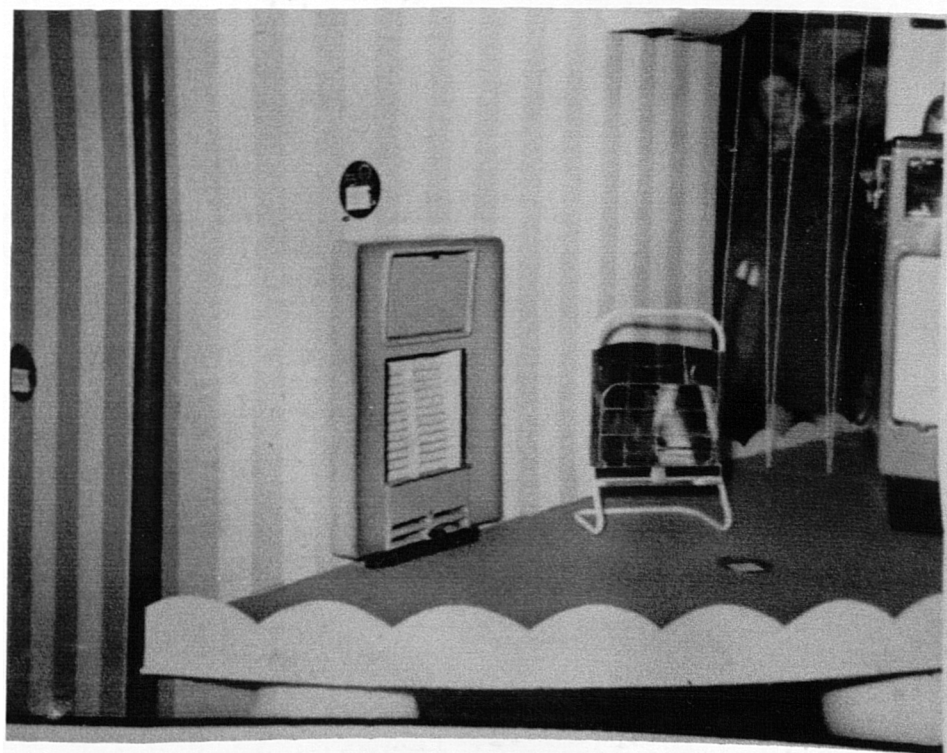


Illustration 44: The Gas pavillion of the 1948 Exhibition was designed by James Gardiner based on the theme 'The Seven Ages of Woman'.

Illustration 45: Heating was a significant concern in the immediate postwar period and Gardener's design's do not hide the austerity of the time.



... Moreover, the experience gained by a vast number of women now in industry and in the services will influence their attitudes to housing; for war-time factories and hostels often provide high standards of services and equipment, which will make such women intolerant of inferior conditions in their own homes. In the same way both men and women have become conscious during the war of the potentialities of modern scientific developments and will expect to enjoy the benefit of these discoveries at home (*Design of Dwellings* 1944: 10 para 12).

The experience of using machines in the factory for wartime production had familiarised women with the use of such equipment, and this was likely, along with the desire to remove heavy labour involved in some domestic tasks, to have contributed to women being more favourably disposed to use domestic equipment in the early postwar period. The experience of living in hostels and working in factories also brought woman into contact with higher standards of heating and lighting than they had previously enjoyed in the home, and again the Dudley Committee recognised the need to improve domestic heating:

There is an obvious need for more efficient methods of heating and maintaining a more even temperature within the dwelling.

There is need of a heating appliance which will heat several rooms from one source. Further research is necessary into methods of economical central heating both in houses and flats (*Design of Dwellings* 1944: 28 para 121).

As part of the second postwar Exhibition in 1948, James Gardner was engaged to design a pavilion for the British Gas Council. It took the theme *The Seven Ages of Woman* (Illustrations 44, 45). This stressed 'the vital part played by gas through every age from the cradle to old age' (*Ideal Home Magazine* March 1948: 50). While the title suggested a recognition of the importance of home heating to women, it did so in a way that trivialised it. The extreme winter of 1947 had been hard for everyone, but it was also the year of the 'baby boom'. The return of peace, the return of demobilised troops, and the return of women to the home were accompanied by a sustained demographic change in terms of increased childbirth, the impact of which was seen in plans like those for the 'W.I. House' with its provision of pram space in the hall. The need for adequate heating during the winter months and for adequate supplies of hot water, would have been a particularly urgent issue for such women.

The desire of women to find a voice over this issue is revealed in an article expressing their concerns about heating in the home which the *Daily Mail* headed *Wives Want Warm Homes by Law*. It continued:

The trouble with British homes is that they have too little hot water for washing up, are not warm enough, and waste enormous quantities of fuel. British housewives say so. And today they produced answers to their problems - in a comprehensive report, issued by the Women's Advisory Council on Solid Fuel (Daily Mail 16 April 1951: 3).

The *Daily Mail* described the report as being by a panel of women experts. The Women's Advisory Council on Solid Fuel was chaired by Lady Egerton, and the *Daily Mail* described her as 'the wife of the scientist, Sir Alfred Egerton - chairman of the Scientific Advisory Committee to the Ministry of Fuel - and a sister of Sir Stafford Cripps'. (Thus defining Lady Egerton in terms of well known men.) The article was prompted by a question on the report that was due to be asked in the House of Commons of the Minister of Fuel and Power. He was to be asked whether he knew of the work of the Women's Advisory Council and what practical help his department was giving. Lady Egerton said that there were many millions of homes with no adequate arrangements for space heating and for supplying hot water. She called on women to remedy the 'present unsatisfactory state of affairs' by bringing pressure on local authorities, MPs and fellow citizens. She was also reported as saying:

Many new houses are being built without proper insulation and without enough care and thought being given to the most economical way of giving the housewife the comfort and convenience that she is entitled to (Daily Mail 16 April 1951: 3).

The Council made twenty-five recommendations including the need to supply water to all homes, together with modern appliances for providing hot water. All new homes should have modern economical heating units - by law; and local councils should be forced to install modern equipment when converting old houses. It was considered that methods of whole house heating should be regarded as an immediate target.

A *Daily Mail* report on the 1951 Exhibition, held a month before to the publication of the Women's Advisory Council report, said, '...we found our exhibition highlight: something prosaic, a new fire-grate.' It was a highlight because it increased the heating efficiency from about 40 per cent to between 70 and 80 per cent (*Daily Mail* 1951: 5). It may be noted that the Dudley Committee had actually called for 'labour-saving coal-burning grates and stoves' This, together with the report of the Women's Advisory Committee explains why such an item could be described as an 'exhibition highlight' (*Design of Dwellings* 1944: 28 para 121).

Whilst the wartime experience on women working in factories, emergency services, and contributing in other ways to the war effort brought a degree of equality: the 'return' to the home with its accompanying discourses of femininity was anything but. A comparison of the 1947 mural image with the 1956 'House of the Future' nine years later is striking. Although the technology and clothes were intended as futuristic (for the eighties), the portrayal of the role of the woman and the ideological values incorporated in the design of the clothes represented contemporary values and a considerable and regressive change.

The clothes were specially designed for the display by Teddy Tinling (most well know for his Wimbledon women's costume design) in consultation with costume historian James Laver. Far from the trousers discussed by Lisa Tickner the Catalogue description continues in terms that now would be found questionable:

Mr Tinling feels that women will wear ultra-feminine clothes in the home. "Out-of-doors their clothes will have to be almost as severe as men's" he says. ... as a reaction to this, I feel sure she will want light pretty clothes to wear in her well-heated home. Through history women have emphasised their femininity by décolleté necklines and the woman of the future will be no exception (*Exhibition Catalogue* 1956: 100).

In order to describe the house, the Catalogue gave an imaginary guided tour, which began by introducing the occupants Anne and Peter. Their portrayal had a strong and definite gender bias in terms of the role assigned to each, and the content and ideas of the language used to describe them from which the following phrases have been abstracted:



Anne will probably answer (the front door) from the kitchen ...

Anne is greatly in favour of its (wall cupboards) shallow compartments, for with storage in length rather than depth everything in it is so readily accessible.

Anne's electric saucepans and frying pan ...

Anne can use either at the Galley Island ...

Anne's pantry ...

This makes shopping very easy for Anne ...

Anne seldom uses it (the washing machine) in this way (to spin dry) ...

Anne has an electric rotary ironer ...

Anne finds the self-rinsing system (this swills the bath down with a foamless detergent rinse) an absolute boon.

Anne and Peter have these (niches around the mirror) strictly apportioned out of their toilet requirements. Anne having by far the largest share, you will notice

(Exhibition Catalogue 1956: 99).

Although the house was designed by a young couple who worked as a radical architectural partnership, both Illustrations of 'Anne' show her in the singularly active domestic role of housewife. She was shown as the sole operator in the kitchen, and she was shown in the act of serving food to her seated partner in the living-room (Illustrations 22 & 23). The futuristic aspect of the 'House of the Future' was the sophisticated nature of many of the gadgets. The majority of these came under the description of labour-saving, and as such were specifically related to the tasks and role expected of the housewife. Whatever the speculative value of the 'House of the Future' in terms of technology, it was a representation of the ideologies concerned with gender roles at the time of the Exhibition.

In the Exhibition, women were not just represented in terms of their supposed role, or as having their own appropriate tasks about the home, implicit in their portrayal was the suggestion that they did not have the same capabilities as men. Women were portrayed as users of a particular space - the kitchen, and consumers of objects like kitchen appliances. As a consequence of this positioning women were credited with a degree of experience. They could even be spoken of patronisingly as 'experts'. From their practical knowledge they might have been able to respond to a question posed by the Queen, or answer the W.I. questionnaire about their requirements of a home. However, although there were

individual women, like Elizabeth Denby, whose abilities might be recognised, women were not in general represented as having the ability to initiate and organise the space assigned to them in the most effective manner as the following example shows:

Every housewife dreams of having an ideal Kitchen, but even if she can afford one she is not always sure what form it should take...

The Council of Scientific Management in the Home decided that a detailed work and motion study, similar to that made by productivity teams in the nations factories, was long overdue in the kitchen life of the country.

In a survey organised by the Council, housewives all over Britain co-operated by reporting on their own kitchen habits and how they thought their own kitchens could be improved.

It was discovered that many working hours were wasted through bad designing and the lessons learned through the views of housewives were combined with the experiences of experts in Domestic Science to produce this ideal kitchen (Exhibition Catalogue 1955: 103).

Although the Council of the Scientific Management of the Home, first chaired by Caroline Haslett well before the war, was a women's group, the text today reads very much as though women were considered in need of instruction. In his discussion of kitchen design, Adrian Forty quotes from *Odham's Household Management Illustrated* (c.1950) which makes a similar comparison with factory practices to this quotation. It says that no man would expect to produce proper work without the right tools, but that housewives struggle on with inadequate equipment, 'she must, therefore, make sure that her home is run easily by using care in choosing her tools.' The kitchen was thus not only a space of special interest to the Exhibition as an object of display derived from its being an especially important site of consumption in the home, it was also an area of control. In addition to the need for the kitchen to be 'properly designed', it was represented as a space that women must be helped and educated to use properly. This Exhibition display that at one level brought to the public's attention things that were new and innovative in design for the home, at another level constituted an educative and controlling process that was mediated through the Exhibition. In addition its apparent scientific basis further helped not only to increase consumption, but also to legitimate it, particularly as 'Running a home and rearing children was to be a scientific operation, which would supposedly give the

housewife new status and importance' (Partington in Attfield & Kirkham (eds.) 1989: 207).

The display of the Council of Scientific Management in the Home was about the rationalisation of domestic labour and forms part of the discourse of labour-saving and the home. The concept of 'labour-saving' has been subject to a degree of scrutiny and questioning by design historians and feminists like Attfield & Kirkham (eds.) (1989), Forty (1986), Hayden (1981), Oakley (1974 & 1985) and Schwartz Cowan (1989). All of whom have argued that the belief that domestic appliances reduce the amount of domestic labour and are therefore labour-saving is a frequently repeated myth. The argument is that the burden of domestic labour for women has not been reduced because the tasks and standards have increased. 'Labour-saving' was the title of one of the display sections in the Exhibition throughout the period under discussion and it was a term that frequently appeared, or was alluded to, in the Catalogues - twenty-five out of eighty-two house descriptions and editorial articles referred to it. Sometimes the term was used in a general way. The description of the 1947 'Lovell House', for example, said every feature was labour-saving, and the 'Davis House' of 1956 was described as a labour-saving house. The term was most frequently associated with the kitchen and its appliances and the other eating spaces. It was thus almost exclusively linked either explicitly or implicitly with the role of the housewife. Thus discussions of the kitchen as a site of consumption, of labour and of gender were linked by discourses and ideologies of labour-saving and progress.

No section of the Exhibition displays greater fertility of ideas than that devoted to labour saving devices used in the home. ... Our housewife need barely wet her hands ... These labour saving ingenuities are carried into the hours of what may be termed comparative leisure and make the task or pleasure of knitting, sewing and embroidering an automatic pursuit and mightily efficient (Exhibition Catalogue 1954: 12).

Far from the housewife barely needing to wet her hands, Ann Oakley observes:

... 'Consumerism', the involvement of society in the family, the involvement of the family in the physical aspects of living, has elevated the importance of housewifery. New domestic equipment constantly requires the acquisition of yet more equipment, for technical as well as status reasons. The fitted carpet demands a carpet sweeper and the carpet shampooer; highly polished furniture demands the polish that will

effortlessly and effectively maintain its immaculate gloss. All demand 'more' and 'better' housework (Oakley 1974: 66).

When women were mentioned in the Catalogues it was in three main contexts. First, they were referred to as the nominal 'housewife'. Second, they were referred to as the imagined family member of a specific show home. Third, real women were referred to as contributors to the exhibits. Men were referred to much less frequently. Given that the Exhibition was focused on the home it was inevitable that women were represented in that context. Their identification with the home in a genderised role was revealed through the absence of reference to men, for it was this that placed women solely in the home in a manner that became a representation of a specific ideology of gender role. In the houses where imaginary occupants were described, when men were mentioned they were husbands whose occupations were stated. Wives were not described as having any occupations except those associated with the home or possibly some voluntary role in the community. Women who were described as having an occupation outside the home were single.

We have chosen as our imaginary owners, a family of four. Mr. Thrift is an assistant Sales Manager in a nearby factory. His daughter, Susan, aged seventeen has just left school to begin her first job. As well as running a house, and looking after five-year-old Billy, Mrs Thrift finds time to be the village W.V.S. representative, and therefore the focal point for the collection of salvage, magazines for the forces and for the distribution of welfare foods (Exhibition Catalogue 1952: 95).

Or again:

Father is a businessman in the £2,000-£3,000 income bracket with golf, handicrafts and pottering about with his car as his favourite recreations. Mother is domesticated, musical, in fact a pianist of no mean ability. She has learned to take in her stride the entertaining, even at very short notice, of her husband's business associates. In the general running of the house she has the help of a daily woman.

Both children attend the local schools. The boy has a natural bent for things mechanical and, typical for his age, is a space fiction addict and fond of animals. The eight year old daughter is an imaginative child, enjoys reading and drawing and takes a great interest in her clothes (Exhibition Catalogue 1957: 64).

In the two passages almost each phrase of description constitutes a biased gendered understanding of the role of women, their achievements, and interests. When women were referred to in a general way as the housewife, they were represented as watching the children from the kitchen sink window (1947); someone to whom the clean surfaces, restful colours and labour-saving features would appeal (1950); someone whose toil would be saved by appliances (1951); who would be delighted by the labour-saving kitchen (1953); someone who would even 'appreciate the generous sized hall cloakroom with its modern low-level flush suite and hand basin' or the 'feature of special interest to housewives is the entirely new approach to sink and working top' (1956). At the same time women were depicted having their feminine interest excited by the stand devoted to nylons or having their personality reflected in the feminine and romantic decorations of a bedroom (1957).

The image of women represented by the *Ideal Home Exhibition* was not just of a housewife but also as a mother and as a member of an idealised family, for implicit in the Exhibition's representations was that the ideal home was the dwelling of the ideal family. Indeed for many people a definition of home would be as much an expression of significant relationships as of material location. As a consequence many show homes were deliberately furnished around an imaginary family. Frequently reference was made to a father, mother and children. The stereotype of two children - a boy and a girl - was not reduplicated rigidly: with the 1962 'America Line House', it was a young couple with a baby that was envisaged; in the same year the 'Davis House', for example, added twin babies to the mother, father, son and daughter pattern. In making variations of the basic model, girls predominated slightly as the imaginary children - the 1951 'Unity House' imagined a family of four with two girls, or the 1962 'Adaptable House' had two girls and a baby in addition to the parents. Possibly this reflected the association of the home and its interior with the feminine rather than any early attempt at 'political correctness'. The 'ideal family' was, however, not only present in the Catalogue descriptions that referred directly to parents and the number and sex of their imaginary children, the 'ideal family' was

implicit in the furnishings of the many homes that made no explicit reference to the imagined household. The double and single beds, the table layouts, the chairs, the forms of decoration and wall paper all bore witness to a specific concept of household as the occupiers of the show home. Whether the home was suggested as being occupied by an imaginary family, or whether that family was merely implicit in the furnishings and decor, the show home provided an idealised domestic space for the visitor to fill in their imagination - but it, nevertheless, implied a nuclear family.

All of these imaginary families conform to the image termed by Sir Edmund Leach, the 'cornflakes packet family'. Leach caused something of a stir when he attacked the nuclear family, 'with its narrow privacy and tawdry secrets,' as 'the source of all discontents' in his 1967 Reith lecture. This 'cornflakes packet' image was well expressed in an Open University publication:

Mr and Mrs Average have two blond children, a semi-detached house, a dog, a garden, and a fairly new car. They eat hot soup on cold days. They don't argue and fight. They seem to like getting up in the morning because of the sunshine that breakfast brings into their lives. Grime comes easily off their floors and germs never pollute their sinks. They eat chocolate and it doesn't rot their teeth or stain their clothes. And when they go to bed their bedtime drink assures a peaceful sleep before another perfect day. Or that is what the adverts would have us believe! (Open University with the Health Education Council publication 1981).

As a description of the 'ideal' family for the 'ideal home', this passage could hardly be improved on. However, the ideological nature of the 'cornflakes packet family' implicit in the Exhibition is apparent as soon as academic attempts to define the family are considered. Life events and the diversity of cultural differences that can be found result in families taking a variety of forms: extended families; step families; childless families; parentless families; multi-race families and so on. Furthermore, while the Exhibition appeared to represent the nuclear family as given; during the lifetime of the Exhibition, and especially during the period after the Second World War, both the nature of marriage and the family were undergoing significant changes. Thus along with a number of other social changes that were taking place during the period under consideration, such as changes in

housing tenure and changes in domestic consumption, changes were also taking place in the pattern of the family. Despite the changes that were underway and the variety of forms that the family could take, the 'conflakes packet family' represented in the Exhibition was so well fixed as a cultural concept that it functioned as a signifier of the 'real' family.

In making representations of the 'ideal' or 'normative' family the Exhibition was, as with housing, touching on an issue of political significance. This significance derived from the fact that not only did families make demands upon the state for housing and welfare benefits, but through the socialisation of offspring families reproduce culture, and act as an agent of control by teaching the limits of behaviour. For the state families have both a Foucauldian disciplinary function and an Althassarian ideological function. If families are an apparatus in this sense, then the Exhibition functioned as an apparatus that, along with all the other media forms, helped to maintain the notion of the nuclear family as the 'ideal' in postwar British culture. Furthermore, if Marx was correct in considering the family as the basic property-holding institution in capitalist society, then the family is linked to the political significance of owner-occupation referred to in the previous chapter.

Even though the Exhibition represented the individual nuclear family as the natural inhabitants of the 'ideal home', the house as a home used more or less exclusively by a nuclear family was a relatively recent development. It has been discovered, using a 'family-cycle' approach, that household patterns of the past that appeared constant were in actuality remarkably flexible. 'Throughout the nineteenth century and the early part of this century, approximately one-half to one third of all households had boarders and lodgers at some point; about the same percentage of individuals had lived as boarders and lodgers in other people's households in the transitional period between leaving home and getting married' (Hareven in Drake (ed.) 1994: 21). A study of Lancashire households between 1890 and 1940 showed over the period that there was a significant decline in the number of different categories of people who once lived with kin. The categories included: unmarried daughters living with parents, unmarried brothers and sisters living with

siblings, orphaned children, children whose parents were still alive but were unable to support them at home.

Demographic changes and increased living standards have largely removed the need for people to live with kin (Finch in Drake (ed.) 1994: 93). According to Anderson, it is this cessation of other kin and lodgers sharing the house, combined with the rise in living standards bringing about a cessation of sharing rooms and even beds, together with smaller and therefore individually family occupied houses, that has meant that privacy was one of the specific characteristic developments in the life of the family postwar (Anderson in Drake (ed.) 1994).

In part the image of the 'cornflakes packet family' was the result of changes in the pattern of motherhood that developed from the beginning of the twentieth century, partly as a result of developments such as the reduction of infant mortality and improvements in contraceptive practice. Prior to the twentieth century, not only was the number of children born to a family larger, but, the end of a mother's period of child rearing was followed a few years later by involvement in the raising of grandchildren. In the period under investigation, as a consequence of both the contraction of the time required for childbearing and a fall in the age of marriage, women have been able to return to work for a considerable period, usually working through the time when grandchildren were born. Thus the counterpart of the women factory worker in the 1947 mural became in reality not a contributor to postwar reconstruction but, after a period of cultural relegation to the home and an actual period devoted to the raising of children, a contributor to the later consumer boom.

In addition to a refined awareness of demographic changes, there has been a development in the understanding of the changes that have taken place in the patterns of family decision making. The shortcomings of the 'family-cycle' model, which in reality identifies stages of parenthood, have, according to Hareven, been dealt with through the



'life-course' approach which examines individuals' and families' timing of life transitions in relation to historical time. This has shown that in the past many decisions that might appear 'individual' were part of an integrated family strategy. However, particularly since the Second World War, decisions have become more individualised. For example, the decision of a couple to get married has become more contingent on the finding of a suitable partner than the requirements and constraints placed upon them by their families. Again this is a trend that began with the middle-class (Hareven in Drake (ed.) 1994: 22).

Anderson says that 'most of the significant "new" features in the nature of the family are a product of the twentieth century and that, for much of the population, these changes are really a feature of life in the period after 1945 ...' (Drake 1994: 68). In addition to the development of privacy within the home already referred to, Anderson describes two other main things as characteristics of the family since the Second World War: first predictability, and second the loss of structures of control.

What all this seems to suggest is that another important new characteristic of family life - indeed all life - in the years after the Second World War was greater age-gradedness and predictability. A young person aged, say 14, looking forward in the 1960's, could, with a reasonable probability of being right, have predicted within a very few years the timing of his or her future life course - leaving school, entering employment, leaving home, marrying and setting up home, early patterns of child - bearing and rearing. None of this would have been possible in the nineteenth century; much would have been difficult before 1945. Possibly we are again returning to a situation of much greater diversity of experience. Whatever the trends, an increased ability to 'plan' one's family life seems a feature of society over the past thirty years (Drake 1994: 83).

Life as experienced by children of the postwar generation has been quite different from that experienced by their predecessors. In the 1970's only a few years separated a young person's leaving education and embarking upon marriage. Children's contribution to the household economy or resources is now minimal, and there are now no sanctions in terms of control by the family over life chances. Anderson considers that this loosening of control and the many changes that have facilitated independent lifestyles have led to a situation where 'in a very real sense family members could lead segmented lives, one part secret from another ...' (Drake 1994: 86). In the real home as opposed to the 'ideal

home', the family shifted, to a degree, from a collective unitary group into a household that was more a collection of separate individuals. The representations of the *Ideal Home Exhibition* failed to recognise and reflect the significant shifts that were taking place in family life and therefore in the lives of the visiting public.

The mural of the 1947 Exhibition shows that the *Ideal Home Exhibition* could have espoused an egalitarian, progressive, set of values, but instead the postwar Exhibition represented something quite different. The individual home was seen as set in the nation as home. Through its spectacles the Exhibition articulated a view of 'real' England as an Arcadian paradise whose glorious heritage had been defended by her 'island race'. 'This England' was the setting of the 'ideal home'. Far from building a 'new land' based on aspirations nurtured by the war that resulted in the landslide election of the postwar Labour Government, such notions of renewal that remained looked back into history and were transformed in aspirations for a new Elizabethan age. The symbolic landscape of the Arcadian vision was related to the notion of reward and return for those who had laboured to build the Empire. It was an avoidance of recognising the dark side of capitalism, yet it failed to offer Arcadia's rural democracy, instead it represented an idyll of benign and sanitised images of the great estate that had developed through the creation of the class relations of agricultural capitalism.

Just as the opulent dwelling acted as one signifier of the 'ideal' so the scale and luxury enjoyed by the wealthy was a signifier of the 'ideal' lifestyle that the privileged home could offer. But at this stage the associations were not just with what money could buy they were with tradition and class. The Exhibitions' representations of the 'ideal' were set in a discourse of class identity and class relations. The 'ideal home' was an Englishman's home and essentially an Englishman was a person of status. For the Exhibition, both the class relations of English society, and the sense of English identity involved the institution of the monarchy. Royal patronage was important to the Exhibition for the prestige it gave

and it may be that the Exhibition was used by the monarchy as part of repositioning of itself with the population of the country.

Women in particular were addressed by the Exhibition in a way that located them firmly in the domestic realm. With the discontinuation of their wartime roles, women were reassigned to domestic tasks where discourses of labour-saving offered 'higher standards' of living whilst creating the processes of consumption. In positioning women in the roles of wife and mother, the Exhibition was also articulating an image of the nuclear family that was ideological and that failed to reflect the changes that were even then in the process of coming about. Whilst women were predominately associated with the home, the lack of equality in the way they were addressed ensured that the home was understood as a male possession where 'the Englishman's home is his castle'.

## CONCLUSION

### **The Myth of the Ideal Home Exhibition**

The aim of this research has been to investigate the representations of the ideals of home, and their determination, mediated by the *Daily Mail Ideal Home Exhibition* during the period 1944 to 1962, in order to explore how, through their dissemination, the Exhibition intervened in the politics and definitions of home. To meet this aim, the first part of the thesis discussed the popular ideals of home that emerged from the circumstances created by the war. It situated the *Ideal Home Exhibition* in the immediate postwar exhibition context in order to reveal the relationship of the Exhibition to issues of design and the commercial interest of exhibitors. The Exhibition was discussed as a business, considering both the objectives of the organisers and the audience it attracted. In the second part of the thesis, the representations made by the Exhibition, particularly those in the ‘Village of Ideal Homes’, were examined in order to identify historical shifts in ideals of home in relation to housing design and the issues and political objectives of postwar reconstruction. The Exhibition was then discussed as an intervention in the development of postwar consumerism, and as an intervention in the rise of postwar owner-occupancy. Finally, the Exhibition’s representations were discussed in relation to its ideological address of nationalism, class and gender. The findings, and their implications, revealed by this research are now considered below.

The first part of this discussion was concerned with the production and consumption of the Exhibition in so far as these issues acted as determinants of the ideals mediated by it. It was therefore concerned not only with the material production of the Exhibition, but also with the context of ideals of home and housing within which it was situated, for which the events of the Second World War were of major significance. For the most important factor, that determined not only the development of housing in this country after the Second World War but also the immediate postwar representations of the *Ideal Home Exhibition*, was the immense destruction of homes, disruption of home life, and disruption of the building programme that took place during that war. Had it not been for the fact that

the Exhibition was forced to close for the duration of the war, it would have been a natural venue and participant in the widespread wartime debates about the future of housing, which were occasioned by the war damage and conducted both at popular and official levels. The Exhibition department, nevertheless, made a contribution to the debates, albeit as an act of self promotion, through the publication, in 1944, of Mrs Pleydell-Bouverie's book *The Daily Mail Book of Post-War Homes*. This publication is far from what one would now associate with the *Daily Mail* in that it was a strongly feminist text, advocating that women should be active participants in the decision-making process concerning housing. Her book also strongly argued for social reform through the abolition of poor housing conditions. Pleydell-Bouverie claimed that her book was based on views expressed by 'the women of Britain', and this thesis has sought to demonstrate that Pleydell-Bouverie used the same, or very similar, evidence to that supplied by women's organisations to the Dudley Committee. On that assumption it has compared and contrasted the two documents.

Pleydell-Bouverie claimed that the evidence available to her showed that the fundamental ideal to which the overwhelming majority of people aspired towards the end of the war was to have a house (90%) with a garden (99%). The book suggested that the ideal of privacy was significant; not only did this contribute to the popularity of houses as opposed to flats, it also explained the resistance to shared communal facilities like laundering. As far as the internal arrangements of the house were concerned, Pleydell-Bouverie shared similar, but not identical views regarding space standards (hers were usually higher), including the provision of a utility-room, to the Dudley Report. Both reflected the shifting ideals regarding the apportionment of space for cooking, eating and general living, a key determinant of which was the shift from the coal range as the main source of heat for cooking and hot water with the introduction of electricity and gas services.

Many of Pleydell-Bouverie's proposals, like the provision of an immersion heater or a noiseless flush toilet, would now be seen as very basic indeed. Both Dudley and Pleydell-Bouverie showed that the ideals being sought in house design and standards at the

beginning of peacetime were those that would enable a basic standard of decent living and that would help to minimise the burden of domestic labour. For example, when Pleydell-Bouverie's description of a 'dream kitchen'<sup>1</sup> is compared with Margaret Sherman's 'Ideal Home' exhibit in 1951<sup>2</sup>, the 'dream kitchen' appears quite basic. Nevertheless it would not have seemed so to the thirty-four per cent of women respondents to the Women's Advisory Council whose only means of heating water was a kettle. Thus the evidence is that postwar reconstruction, in addition to the replacement of housing stock, involved a real desire to see a significant improvement in living conditions. The concern was to have a dwelling that would provide sufficient space to house its inhabitants in privacy, that would facilitate the tasks of daily life, and enable family routines. It is this situation that provided the material, political and popular aspirational context of the postwar *Ideal Home Exhibitions*. However, Pleydell-Bouverie's feminist voice, expressed in her political stance regarding women's participation in housing issues, and in her extensive and detailed analysis of housing standards, was an ideal not heard again in the Exhibition.

Thus when the *Ideal Home Exhibition* reopened after the war, it did so in a context of urgent housing need, of both new dwellings and improved standards, of an unprecedented scale. While the nation had been prepared to vote in a Labour Government with a landslide majority in 1945, communal or collective solutions to home life were rejected, and the individualist solutions of the 'traditional' house and garden constituted the 'ideal' for the great majority of people, if the claims of Pleydell-Bouverie are correct. Just as she attributed this to a reaction against enforced communal living, so the Dudley Report suggested that aspirations for better standards had developed partly as a result of direct experience. Women who had worked in wartime factories had experienced higher standards of heating and lighting<sup>3</sup>. In the same way, they had also been made familiar with technological developments and the use of a variety of machines. These practical experiences together with the wartime debates, aspirations, and discussions were the

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<sup>1</sup> See page 41.

<sup>2</sup> See page 165.

<sup>3</sup> See page 32.

fundamental determinants in the creation of desire in relation to housing and ideals of home.

Given that interest in housing and ideals of home were a significant aspect of the postwar context of the Exhibition, the question arises as to how the Exhibition was positioned to respond to this situation. An examination of the *Ideal Home Exhibition* in relation to other immediate postwar exhibitions concerned with design for domestic consumption, revealed that the *Ideal Home Exhibition* was significantly different from those exhibitions where a concern with design aesthetics was paramount. In contrast with *Britain Can Make It* and the *Festival of Britain*, the *raison d'être* of the *Ideal Home Exhibition* was nothing to do with design; the fundamental role of the *Ideal Home Exhibition* was the promotion of the *Daily Mail* newspaper. Furthermore, the impression is gained that the very success of the Exhibition had, because of the commercial interests of the management board, engendered a view that saw the Exhibition in terms of its value as a source of revenue for Associated Newspapers.

Despite the Exhibition's public claims to lead the way in matters of innovation, taste and design, the Report of Cecil Lewis to the management board of Associated Newspapers, which has not been previously discussed, shows that this was not the case<sup>4</sup>. He reinforced his point with the comment that those responsible for running a chain of newspapers were not necessarily in the *avant-garde* of public taste. Far from being an exemplar of taste and design Lewis criticised the Exhibition for its dullness. There was, he considered, nothing there for the 'intelligent public' to see because it was little more than a mammoth department store. Unlike the *Ideal Home Exhibition*, the CoID, with its concern to promote 'good design', had the practice of selection as central to its approach. The selected exhibits acted as exemplars of its design ideals intended to educate both the public and manufacturers. This was not a practice that commended itself to the business community, particularly when design took precedence over availability for purchase, as was the case

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<sup>4</sup> See Chapter 3.

with *Britain Can Make It*. The *Ideal Home Exhibition* had a shared business objective with its exhibitors and, although the Lewis Report indicates that while client relations were not what they should have been, it certainly did not vet the exhibits in the show on the basis of design ideals. If one of the objectives of the official exhibitions was the education of the public in order that they might discriminate on the basis of 'good design', then the *Ideal Home Exhibition* could be considered to be a countervailing force, educating its public not in design but in consumption.

Using the evidence provided by the Lewis Report, it has been possible to show that there was an unsatisfactory management structure and organisational arrangement of the Exhibition. This was a result of the way the department that organised the Exhibition was created out of the existing organisation of the *Daily Mail* newspaper as a publicity vehicle. The way that the Exhibition remained subsumed in the organisation and management of the *Daily Mail* is revealed by both financial and organisational details that Lewis gave in the Report. Particularly revealing was the fact that the Exhibition had no funds of its own, and that it was unable to demonstrate the extent of its profitability. The second important factor is the degree of control exercised by the management board of Associated Newspapers despite their lack of expertise, and there are clear indications that there was frustration of the creative talents of those employed to organise and run the Exhibition. The result was that the focus was on the concrete tasks of staging the Exhibition as an annual event. There was no forward planning nor reflection upon future directions either regarding the Exhibition itself, or about how trends associated with the home might have been developing. The business objectives in staging the Exhibition were focused on two main concerns; selling space to exhibitors, and staging an entertaining spectacle to attract the paying public. Even though the Exhibition's function was to publicise the newspaper, the report suggests that the 'features' aspect was under some pressure from the board because these displays consumed space that could otherwise have been sold. Lewis was adamant that the unrestrained pursuit of the 'profit motive' was to the detriment of the Exhibition, but it is clear that there was a strongly held, and dominant, view that things were going well and that change was unnecessary.



It is also clear that there were a number of administrative and managerial problems in the running and organisation of the Exhibition as a commercial proposition. Not only was space becoming difficult to sell, some of the more prestigious exhibitors had abandoned the Exhibition. They were being replaced by firms Lewis judged to be inferior and there was, in addition, a high turnover in exhibitors<sup>5</sup>. One consequence of this was that certain sections of the Exhibition were seriously inadequate as regards their content. Another was that exhibitors were able to use the threat of withdrawal to put pressure on the organisers. There is also evidence of a lack of knowledge in the trends of kinds of exhibitor, and of problems in client relations.

The CoID claimed the power to define what constituted 'good design', and exercised this through its process of selection. The 'ideals' promoted through the *Ideal Home Exhibition* were effectively defined by the exhibitors through what they chose to display. While there may have been those, like Lewis, who would have liked to have improved the standards of the exhibits by exercising selection over the exhibitors (rather than the exhibits), commercial pressures were a significant factor in the power relations between the organisers and the exhibitors. Instead of a selection of exhibits chosen on the grounds of design aesthetics, the 'ideals' of the Exhibition emerged through the interplay of various determinants. On the one hand there were the issues that stemmed from the attempt to stage a popular commercial show by responding to popular aspiration, satisfying market appeal, and working within the limitations commercial availability: on the other hand there were the micro-politics of the relations between the organisers and the exhibitors, and, to a lesser extent, between the organisers and the management board of Associated Newspapers. It is therefore what might be termed the Exhibition's politics of display that lie behind the 'ideals' that were represented through commercial exhibits of Exhibition.

If the Exhibition's management was inadequately informed about its exhibitors prior to 1957, they likewise knew little of its audience beyond the number of ticket sales. Yet,

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<sup>5</sup> See page 86.

despite these shortcomings, the attendance figures show how popular the Exhibition was during the postwar period. Thus, although questions may be raised about its claim to be 'the greatest show on earth' in terms of content, there is no denying its success in attracting a huge audience that all but doubled pre-war attendances. Such market research as was conducted by the Exhibition has not been previously discussed. It has enabled this thesis to show that the social make-up of the audience of the Exhibition closely resembled the readership of the *Daily Mail*, with the representation of those in category C1 being significantly greater than the national average. Not only did the market researchers state that the Exhibition's public had greater purchasing power than the national average but, with hindsight, it can be seen that these visitors constituted an audience from which new home owners would have been most likely to have emerged. The rise of the Exhibition's popularity coincides with the boom in postwar consumption, a fact that may be explained, if the view proposed here is correct, by the Exhibition's defining of the 'ideal home' in terms of consumption. Certainly the Exhibition appears to have been uniquely placed to meet people's needs at the time, as it was focused on the home precisely when this was, perhaps, the most pressing issue postwar. The Exhibition was a showcase for new products when there were financial constraints on the stocks carried by retailers. It was an outlet for goods when they were in short supply. It was an entertainment that fuelled *people's aspirations*. It provided models of housing, of furnishing, and of domestic consumption, at a time of significant national change in housing tenure. Nevertheless, development of the high street retail market and the eventual success of commercial television in due time challenged the Exhibition's special place in the market. The Exhibition's success and slow decline can be seen as the result of its relation to the rapid rise in consumerism and, later, the subsequent expansion of retail market outlets. As an ideological apparatus the Exhibition achieved its hegemony through the specific historical economic conditions of the postwar period. For firms associated with housing and items of domestic consumption, and supplying a population seeking to rebuild and improve the material conditions of domestic life, the Exhibition was a uniquely placed point of mediation.

Despite the unprecedented public interest in issues of housing and home making, the evidence suggests that the management of Associated Newspapers were not concerned with ideals of home but with profit and publicity. Although they had inherited a winning formula, and the Exhibition was uniquely positioned, the business management of the Exhibition was neither designed to explore in depth ideals of home, nor to develop plans for events and displays which would reflect insights concerning such issues. This establishes the initial premise for the second part of this thesis that the Exhibition was not so much about the advocacy of ideals of home as a representation of ideologies of home. The position proposed here is that the Exhibition functioned as an Ideological State Apparatus in the way described by Althusser (1971). The ideological address of the Exhibition was through its representations, namely its exhibits and displays, its catalogues and other accompanying media all of which together constituted a system of signs. Barthes suggests two main ways in which signs work ideologically through denotation and connotation, and through myth (Barthes 1977 & 1973). Many of the representations in the Exhibition worked through the ideas and messages that they connoted, be they about the role of women in the home, class, consumption, modernity, labour-saving, and the like. In this way signs articulate particular ideas or ways of seeing things. Signs, according to Barthes also work to efface issues and hide contradictions and it is in this sense that he uses the term 'myth'. Through the construction of the notion of the 'ideal home' with the 'ideal' being appropriated by consumption, the Exhibition naturalised the relations of production and consumption. The Exhibition was itself a sign, a myth cast in material form, that enabled it to function as an ideological apparatus.

While the first part of the discussion was concerned with the context and determinations of the Exhibition and its ideals, the second part of the thesis discussed its representations and their meanings. The aim has been both to discuss the ideals of home as they were represented in the Exhibition and to consider how the audience was addressed through them. A key form of representation was the 'Village of Ideal Homes', which had been an important feature from early on in the life of the *Ideal Home Exhibition*. When the Exhibition reopened after the war, the 'Village' reflected the situation of postwar

reconstruction. Instead of representations of private developers where houses signified social status, the prefabs represented the urgency of the Government re-housing programme, the socialist values of state provision, and the need to return wartime industries to peacetime production. Wartime shortages were apparent not only in the designs and materials used in the prefabricated dwellings, but also in the modest decor of the exhibition hall, and the second-hand furniture used to furnish the houses. Despite this, the houses reflected Bevan's attempt to achieve a high standard of provision and to implement the recommendations of the Dudley Report, and thus they may also be seen as approaching the aims sought by Pleydell-Bouverie. While the Exhibition represented the Government's ideological position regarding housing and the kind of provision that it believed the state should provide, because Government building controls and associated legislation limited what could be represented, the form of representation had what Althusser terms a determination of 'double "functioning"'. That is, partly the representations were determined through the functioning of the 'Repressive Apparatus' of the law and partly through ideology (Althusser 1971: 145)<sup>6</sup>.

Viewed diachronically, the representations in the 'Village of Ideal Homes' constitute an annual register, like rings in a tree trunk, recording shifts in issues of postwar housing. After the display of prefabricated houses, there is the shift back towards the use of more traditional building methods in some of the representations of the 1948 Exhibition. The next Exhibition, (1949) was the first occasion after the war when houses for sale were displayed. The continuing shift towards private sale, together with the dropping of prefabrication, was apparent in 1950. Exhibits in this year also evidenced how companies like Unity and Laing used the Exhibition to pursue their commercial interests in achieving contracts for state provision. This discussion has argued that the 'New Zealand House' may have been displayed in anticipation of the possibility of the nationalisation of the building industry<sup>7</sup>. In this context, the exhibit may have been partly intended as a pre-

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<sup>6</sup> Althusser says that no apparatus is purely repressive or purely ideological, and refers to the way schools may use punishment as an example of the repressive in an ideological apparatus (Althusser 1971: 145).

<sup>7</sup> See page 143.

emptive example of state and private enterprise joint involvement in the production of state housing. This would suggest that, even when Government legislation exercised control over building standards, development, and sales, the Exhibition was active in reflecting the commercial interests and approach of its exhibitors. Nevertheless, and most important, the 'Village' in the years 1947-50 was unique in the history of the Exhibition as the buildings shown did indeed represent a particular philosophy regarding housing design. This was not the philosophy of the Exhibition management but that of the Labour Government and their attempt to implement a socialist housing policy of state provision with a much reduced role for private house purchase.

Although, during the period of the postwar Labour Government the houses in the 'Village' were examples of socialist state provision and of Government ideals for housing standards, in their internal furnishing they were a mediation of the nascent capitalist domestic consumerism. Thus the show houses had a duality of significance, for even when the 'Village' represented the ideals of Labour housing policy it was also functioning as an apparatus of consumerist ideology. Representations of socialist housing became the home for representations of capitalist consumption.

As the period of postwar reconstruction began to shift to nineteen-fifties consumerism, so too the Exhibition registered a shift from the house as an essential and urgently required shelter to the home as a site for the consumption of domestic goods. Partly this shift developed from the political context in which the Exhibition was situated. By the early fifties, there was a rise in concern among the middle classes for material affluence rather than the wartime 'fair shares' ethos. The show houses in the 'Village of Ideal Homes' were not only items of commercial housing display, they were also models of domestic consumption. Consequently, just as the *Ideal Home Exhibition* can be seen as an intervention in the twentieth century shift in housing tenure, so too it can be seen as an intervention fostering the growing hegemony of postwar consumerist values. The houses in the 'Village' of the 1951 Exhibition were quite explicitly models of how to consume as when, for example, Margaret Sherman demonstrated how to furnish a small house on the

limited budget of £500<sup>8</sup>. Consequently this thesis has proposed the suggestion that in the 'Village of Ideal Homes' the Exhibition extended the concept of the model house to being an instructional exemplar of consumption. The show houses of the 'Village' were an appropriation and development of this tradition because they were no longer reformist, but were constituted as exemplars of what to buy and how to combine purchases. Furthermore, as exemplars the houses were ideological constructs that 'hailed' and 'interpellated' the visitor. To use Althusser's language, visiting the houses constituted a ritual, part of the material action of attending the Exhibition which inserted the subject into the material practice of the Exhibition as an ideological apparatus.

One thing that is particularly noteworthy about the furnishing of the houses in the 'Village' is that although they were quite consciously instructional, the organisers did not consider it necessary to resort to the advice of experts in interior design. In this the Exhibition seems to have displayed a similar outlook regarding the authority of the design expert as the manufacturers at the *Britain Can Make It* exhibition<sup>9</sup>. The *Daily Mail* journalists who furnished the houses in the 1951 Exhibition were certainly not experts and two years later one of them, Ann Temple, described herself as not having the expertise of a professional designer<sup>10</sup>. As a consequence, and contrasting with the approach of the CoID, how to consume in the home and furnish it was positioned as not being the sole province of the interior designer as an expert taste maker. The impression given is that those having the apparent privileged perception of higher social status, whose homes would have been a signifier of that status, were considered to be in a position to offer advice to others. A signifier of this distinction between the 'good design' approach and that of the Exhibition can be found in their use of language. The more taste-led *House & Gardens* magazine adopted the concept of the Contemporary Style earlier than the market-led Exhibition and also dropped its use earlier. The Exhibition can also be considered to be more focused on ideas of functionality associated with the term 'modern', not least because the home is a

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<sup>8</sup> See page 161.

<sup>9</sup> See page 64.

<sup>10</sup> See page 173.

place of labour as well as of taste. Thus although the Exhibition promoted itself as a leader of taste, this was not a field in which it had expertise, nor where it was ahead, or even abreast, of developments.

Nevertheless, the Exhibition provides clear examples of the recognition that domestic consumption involved more than a quest for efficiency. The furnished home was an exemplar of how to consume at both the functional and the symbolic level. The notion of the 'ideal' involved more than functionality of goods, it was also about their social meaning. At the opposite end to the exemplar provided by the 1951 low budget 'Unity House' was Margaret Sherman's 'Ideal Home Kitchen', which was an exemplar of what might be called 'unconstrained consumption' - as an ideal it was also a rejection of the clinical ideals of Modernism<sup>11</sup>. The appellation 'unconstrained' was used of the Sherman kitchen not only because of the unbridled expenditure which it represented, but also because it was produced at a time when people's finances were thought to be under considerable constraint. The 'House of the Future' shown in 1956 provides an example how the term 'modern' could be mobilised at a symbolic level to legitimate consumerism whilst at the same time connoting ideas of functionality and labour-saving efficiency<sup>12</sup>. While this exhibit was an essay on how things might be in the eighties, through claiming to show how things would be, it was an affirmation of consumerism further validated by technological achievement and utopianism. Ideal living was implied as the limitless leisure that resulted from the elimination of domestic chores achieved through the possession of consumer durables. The mythological function of the representations lay in the way that the real relations of consumption were disguised. The representation worked to bind people into capitalist production because although the 'ideal home' was represented as a site of leisure and the eradication of domestic work, this required participation in paid labour in order to earn the money to buy the products that would create leisure through their labour-saving capacity.

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<sup>11</sup> See page 165.

<sup>12</sup> See page 176.

The Golden Jubilee Exhibition of 1958 represented a further shift in the furnishing of the houses in the 'Village'<sup>13</sup>. Possibly as a result of the Lewis Report or maybe as an alternative approach to the use of journalists in 1951, the houses were furnished by 'women's' or 'home' magazines. This was a shift that was continued to the end of the period. It was an approach that both increased the publicity the Exhibition received, and legitimised it as an apparatus of instruction in consumption - including the use of hire purchase<sup>14</sup>. The magazines benefited as well as the Exhibition because they were able to develop significant feature articles or even pull-out supplements. The advice given by these magazines on home furnishing, at the end of the fifties and early sixties shows an increase in the amount of advice given on the choice of colour used to decorate the home. In this context the kitchen became prettier and more feminine indicating a rejection of the clinical Modern style. A comparison of the colours employed by these magazines to decorate the show homes does not entirely accord with the view of the fifties offered by Jackson (1991). The colours described or depicted in these magazines were considerably more anarchic than those described by Jackson, whose concept of the colours of the period seems to represent the choices of the design establishment rather than those of the everyday of the women's magazines and the Exhibition. This later attention to the use of colour in the home constitutes a further development in the positioning of the home as a place of distinction and social symbolism, and contrasts with the functional concern of Pleydell-Bouverie and the immediate postwar exhibits.

The Exhibition, as an ideological apparatus, defined the 'ideal home' as a site of consumption, not only through the direct mediation of its representations, but through the number of different discourses that accompanied them like those of 'labour-saving', 'modernity', and 'taste'. A variety of domestic appliances were mediated through the notion of 'labour-saving', likewise discourses of 'modernity' defined not only the functionality of domestic goods but also domestic space and style, which, as with the 'House of the Future', were combined with connotations of progress. In defining the

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<sup>13</sup> See page 181.

<sup>14</sup> See page 187.



home as a site of consumption, it was further defined as a space in which taste operated, and that required 'knowledge'. The exemplars in the 'Village' and their descriptions in the Catalogues and the magazines implied this knowledge, as did the various *Daily Mail* competitions on how to combine different domestic items and furnishings. While this knowledge was not mediated as the exclusive province of the professional designer, because the houses in the 'Village' could be visited as exemplars from which the visitor could learn, the didacticism of these exemplars mediated a form of power-relation between those who had the taste to furnish the exhibits and those who came to view and to learn. In considering the address of the Exhibition as an apparatus, it was this power-relation that, in part, constructed the visitor as a subject interpellated by the ideology of the representation.

Not only did the Exhibition define the home as a site of consumption, it defined it as an object of consumption. The postwar period witnessed a continuation of the profound twentieth century shift in housing tenure from rented accommodation to owner-occupancy. A particular characteristic of this shift after the war was the advent of working class property ownership. Although the first postwar Exhibitions represented the dwellings of the Labour Government's local authority housing programme, in 1953 the first house that could be bought without the problems involved in licence restrictions was exhibited. Licence restrictions were completely removed late in 1954 and from 1955 onwards the Exhibitions represented the interests, values, and developments of the private enterprise market. Owner-occupation has been seen as a political issue by both Right and Left as tending to generate support for the Right, and it has been suggested that those who 'have a stake in the system' tend to support the *status quo*. The achievement of the Conservative goal of a 'property owning democracy' is seen by some, like Saunders (1990), as a triumph of individualism and capitalist values; there is also a further debate as to whether this was an outcome of a Conservative adoption of the 'ramparts-strategy'<sup>15</sup>. Whatever the judgement about particular debates, property ownership has been more warmly espoused and appropriated by the Right. The *Ideal Home Exhibition* played an active role within the

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<sup>15</sup> See page 203 and Dunton 1987: 75ff.

shift in housing tenure, in a way that did not voice these political ramifications. As an apparently apolitical event it naturalised and legitimised owner-occupation: through the Catalogue texts; through the model representations of 'The Village of Ideal Homes'; through its support of private developers; and through the whole ethos of the Exhibition which was an articulation of the ideology of home ownership.

Notwithstanding the fundamental ethos of the Exhibition as articulating owner-occupation and the fact that flats did not accord with popular conceptions of the 'ideal home', the scale of public provision offered such considerable financial opportunities to building contractors, that designs for such local authority buildings were exhibited. However, although flats were represented at the Exhibition, they were not shown on the 'tower-block scale' to which they could be constructed, but on a scale that did not differentiate them from a suburban dwelling. Flats could, however, become signifiers of a particular urban luxury, as was the case with the display of rooms created to represent Penthouse flats. Here luxury was signified as much by refinement and exclusivity as scale. Frequently, however, scale was a primary signifier of luxury in the representations of the 'Village', and towards the very end of the fifties a number of dwellings were exhibited that were of considerable size. They acted as models of the premise that the 'ideal home' was a substantial and opulent dwelling. Contrasting with these more sumptuous buildings were bungalows, which from 1958 onwards were represented in increased numbers. This building form was almost exclusively identified with the private sector. Bungalows were particularly attractive to those approaching retirement as they combined reasonable cost, an absence of stairs, and were located in rural and coastal areas to which had become attached discourses of health and well-being. Although the majority of bungalows were relatively modest dwellings, in the final years of the period there were some of a significant and luxurious scale. The 'Village' can be seen as having developed a continuum ranging from dwellings of modest scale available for purchase for owner-occupation at one end, through to buildings that were prohibitively expensive at the other. In this way the 'Village' naturalised under the notion of 'ideal homes' dwellings that signified a gradation of economic status, and which were a material manifestation of class as a hierarchy.

The debates evidenced by Dudley and Pleydell-Bouverie concerning the internal planning for food preparation and consumption, as well as laundering, reflected a concern to ease domestic tasks and facilitate domestic life in a situation freed from the constraints imposed by the coal range. However, changing patterns in family life and the symbolic as well as the utilitarian consumption of space led to a continued negotiation of these spaces at least as far as houses designed for the private sector were concerned. The different plan forms and solutions offered by houses in the 'Village' represented the negotiation by the architect of space and building costs with both the shifting aspirations and the lifestyle demands of potential purchasers. In the owner-occupied house, at least, the spaces were defined by the tension between the day to day practical requirements of informal meals based around commuting and the school day of children, and provision for the symbolic consumption of food as a formal activity. In the late fifties with the increased availability of improved heating, improved insulation, and the beginnings of central heating, the focus of design interest in the interior moved away from practical concerns like frost-proofing to the organisation of space such as was provided by open-plan layouts. The open-plan form did not find favour with local authorities and again, like the bungalow, it was a private enterprise form for the owner-occupier. The development of open-plan arrangements coincided with an increase in the use of the term 'spacious' in the way that the exhibited houses were described. Though the term could be used to 'talk-up' smaller dwellings this increase in its use was associated with a similar increase in other words that implied a concern with luxury and elegance. Thus consumption had come to include space itself and the way it was represented. The apportionment, structuring, and designation of internal space, and its role in signifying particular forms of the consumption of that space, constituted a form of Bourdieurian social distinction between public and private sector housing.

In the period that spanned postwar reconstruction though to the full-scale consumer boom of the early sixties, the houses in the 'Village' registered several shifts. To begin with the 'Village' showed the home as an urgently needed and essential shelter and place

of privacy for the individual family. As goods became available for purchase and the consumer boom began the Exhibition's representations of the home positioned it as a site of domestic consumption dominated by discourses of labour-saving. From the mid-fifties the 'Village' represented the house as an object of an owner-occupancy that extended to embrace the working class, with the range of houses displayed in the 'Village' representing a graded scale of economic status. By the end of the fifties the interest embraced the internal arrangements of the house. Open-plan layouts were introduced, and furnishings placed a greater emphasis on decor and colour. At the same time, other representations presented an ideal of luxurious consumption that further positioned the role of the house and home in material practices of social distinction. Thus in the first fifteen years of the postwar Exhibitions, the representations of the 'ideal home' shifted from an essential and functional shelter associated with state provision to a privately owned symbolic space manifesting the signifying distinctions of social status.

Though the Exhibition used spectacle to attract the public and add glitter and interest to the shows, they were often imbued with ideological values. Prominent was the Exhibition's representations of Englishness as the idea of England as home. Not only were nation, hearth and home linked, they were linked with the institution of the monarchy, and the Exhibition took as its motto the words of King George V, 'the foundations of the national glory are set in the homes of the people'. Its representation of Englishness was constructed from a combining of significations of countryside, history, tradition and class that constituted an idealised England that was, in turn, the suggested context of the 'ideal home'. Among these representation of the Exhibition were those that mobilised ideas of Englishness that drew on notions of Arcady. A conception which, in itself, is related to discourses of England as home and a reward for the returning Empire builder. Though the construction of the idea of a rural idyll was, in part, rooted in a retreat from the corrupt values of the financial world, the very countryside to which this retreat was made had been constructed from the development of a far from egalitarian agricultural capitalism. The image of England as Arcadia allowed the continuance of the inequalities of class relations to be naturalised within a landscape of settled order.

Class relations lay behind many of the representations and mediations of the Exhibition, from the spectacles to the news stories printed in the *Daily Mail*, including those that represented ideals of home as unobtainably redolent of wealth and luxury. According to Cannadine (1998) the view of society as a settled hierarchy of relations in which were brought together ideologies of the countryside, monarchy and empire, was the dominant view in this country in the period considered by this thesis. The monarchy played a fundamental role in the Exhibition's own estimation of itself as a national institution within an imperial society of deference and class. The monarchy functioned as a signifier of status and prestige and of such attributes as taste, quality, and wealth. Through association these signifieds were imputed to the Exhibition. It used Royal patronage to position itself as the leading exposition of all things to do with the home and as a source of stories for the *Daily Mail* newspaper. In addition, it may equally have been that the Royal Family exploited the opportunity offered by the *Ideal Home Exhibition* to continue the process of repositioning which it had begun during the Second World War.

In the Exhibition, the hierarchy of relationships in society that constituted the orders of precedence and deference included those that positioned women unequally. The role of women was central to any postwar representation of the home, but the Exhibition failed to follow the lead set by Pleydell-Bouverie and represent women in a positive light. It did not continue the idea implicit in its 1947 mural image<sup>16</sup>, instead it positioned women almost exclusively in the home engaged only with the tasks of domestic labour as epitomised by the 'woman' in the 'House of the Future'. While women were thus positioned, they were not represented as having a contribution to serious discussion - they were positioned as consumers who needed instruction. The address of women by the Exhibition was partly revealed by the absence of men in the representations as they were implied to be elsewhere than in the home.

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<sup>16</sup> See page 229.

The depiction of women in domestic roles was part of the Exhibition's wider representation of the family. The family, as represented by the Exhibition, constituted an image termed by Leech, the 'cornflakes packet family'. The idealised depiction of the nuclear family as a natural constant has been challenged by research that has suggested that the home occupying individual private nuclear family was a relatively new development, and that the family was in a process of evolution both before and after the Second World War. The situation that was slowly coming to an end prior to the war was one where families had to share their accommodation with kin and lodgers. The nuclear family as sole occupant of the home began to emerge as a postwar phenomena, but even as it did so it was in a process of development in which separate individual activities began to play a larger part, particularly among teenage children.

With changes brought about by both technological improvement and increasing prosperity the *Ideal Home Exhibition* bears witness to a number of shifts and developments in ideals of home. What is clear is that, while the Exhibition did reflect the aspiration for an individual owner-occupied dwelling with a garden, it did not have, or seek to promote, a specific view of what constituted the 'ideal home' beyond that of a 'common sense' perspective. Despite its many self promotions as being an Exhibition that led the way in all aspects of the home including design, its ideals of home were not expressed in terms of the values of 'good design' such as would have been recognised by the CoID and the 'design establishment'. The Exhibition's representations were commercially driven and essentially the 'ideal home' was portrayed as created through consumption. The Exhibition did not so much present an 'ideal' of the material home as material representations of ideologies of home. The 'ideal home' was about lifestyle and social identity, not design.

Althusser's argument is that ideological apparatuses are not simply institutions that promote an ideology, but that they function to promote and maintain the hegemony of the ruling ideology. This is what the *Ideal Home Exhibition* did. First, through its representations and its editorial promotion in the *Daily Mail* newspaper, it naturalised class

relations. It located the 'ideal home' within the span of deferential class relations that were headed by the monarchy. Second, in a similar manner and through discourses of domesticity it naturalised gender relations within a patriarchal view of the home. Third, it promoted and facilitated the idea of owner-occupation as an ideal; and this, as has been discussed, was not only widely seen as a form of tenure that tends to mobilise support for the *status quo*, but it was also a promotion of the commercial interests of the building industry. Fourth, the Exhibition mediated and facilitated consumption through the promotion of the ideal of domestic consumption as a path to the 'ideal home'. In so doing it promoted the capitalist interests of those industries associated with the production of items for domestic consumption. Finally, it positioned the ideologies of patriarchy, class, ownership and consumption and the notion of the 'ideal home' within the naturalising myths of Englishness, thus establishing its overall hegemonic view of society.

While this thesis has attempted to show how, through its representations, the Exhibition defined the home as a site of consumption, and promoted and sustained the ruling hegemony, the Exhibition is seen as achieving this through the over-arching myth of the 'ideal home'. In his essay *Myth Today* Barthes (1973) describes how signs, as myths, can be shorn from their historical context so that their significations act to efface social contradictions. This view, that the 'ideal home' was a myth applies both to the *Ideal Home* as signifying the Exhibition as an event, and to the notion of the 'ideal home' as signifying a perfect domestic environment.

The way the Exhibition was constituted and was mediated as an event effaced the real relations between the objectives of the management of Associated Newspapers and the visiting public. The organisers promoted and portrayed the Exhibition as the leading exposition in the world relating to the home: however, as has been argued here, the immediate postwar Exhibitions were not about ideals of home, but were about publicising the *Daily Mail* newspaper, and making a profit through the selling of entrance tickets and exhibition space. In the Exhibition the uninhabited show homes of the 'Village', with their 'ideal' imaginary families and every item representing the newest available for purchase,

implied a degree of perfection not known in real homes. The show homes were in a sense 'hyper-real', a simulacrum, a representation of something that does not exist. Real homes are not ideal in this way and the very concept of an *ideal* home was a myth, that naturalised the definition of the home as a site of consumption. For even at the material level homes are a negotiation of practical needs, desires, historical development, and much more. People rarely furnish from scratch; they have things they like but which do not really go with their other things, they have things they have been given that they cannot really dispose of, or they may have partners whose tastes are not identical to their own. They cook, work and have hobbies, all of which create mess, dirt, and disorder. If a home is only ideal when it is spotless, ordered, and filled only with new things, then it is a space from which life has been removed. The idea that an 'ideal home' can be created through consumption is problematic even in its own terms. For example, how long does it remain ideal? For in less than fifteen years the Exhibition shifted from such representation as the temporary shelter of the 'Aluminium House' to the opulent 'Penthouse Flats'. The fact that not everything in the home is new is important too because homes are eclectic 'theatres of memory' where items accrue that speak of the past. Nor can homes simply be created through consumption, because an important aspect of 'home' is the non material part played by relationships and the way that specific locations, objects and meanings become bonded.

The ideally furnished homes in the "Village of Ideal Homes" were not homes, they were constructs or representations. They were produced in order to be models of consumption, they were designed to appear as homes, only 'better'. As idealised and uninhabited dwellings they were signifiers without a history, yet they were ones that made all the items displayed for consumption look natural. As Barthes says, myth 'transforms history into nature' (Barthes 1973: 129). The function of the show homes to create wants and desires and the way that they addressed the visitors as consumers was effaced by their appearing as 'common-sense' practical examples of the best on offer. In this, the show homes differed greatly from the book published by Mrs Pleydell-Bouverie. Her intention was to bring to light the difficulties and hardships experienced by many women, the book was anchored firmly in their story. Through it she hoped to empower women, and provide



practical recommendations and standards that would change their lot. It is also clear, from the details she gives in the book, that Pleydell-Bouverie's aspiration was to improve the lot of working class women as much as any other.

Cannadine says that after the war the tension between the classes was by no means settled. There was a strong belief that the rich had suffered less during the war; there was a hostility to those in authority - the 'Colonel Blimps' and the 'old school tie'; and there was hostility from the Tories who saw the Welfare State, nationalisation, and other Labour actions as unnecessary pieces of class legislation. 'Not surprisingly, post-war Britain was seen by many as a 'polarised society' he says, and cites Hoggart's *Uses of Literacy* as an expression of the strong division between 'them' and 'us' (Cannadine 1998: 146-7). The Conservative response he says:

... meant assembling as in the days of the great Lord Salisbury, a broad collation of the 'haves' in society: the traditionally wealthy, the middle classes and the new 'embourgeoisified' rich among the workers - those whose growing affluence in the 1950s and early 1960s enabled them to buy houses, and own cars and washing machines. Indeed, as more and more people became affluent, the Tory Party, as their representative, seemed destined to do better and better in the polls. 'The class war is over' Harold Macmillan announced after his triumph in the 1959 general election, 'and we have won it' (Cannadine 1998: 149).

The consumerism and the owner-occupancy for which the *Ideal Home Exhibition* stood was clearly in alignment with this project, and the Exhibition was an ideological apparatus that legitimised consumption and so positioned people that they saw the 'Tory Party, as their representative'. The Exhibition and the notion of the 'ideal home' functioned as myth not merely through a promotion of consumerist values, it naturalised the signifiers of social distinction. The houses in the 'Village of Ideal Homes' appeared to be real homes because, for the most part, they were constructed according to the same designs as actual dwellings that could be bought, constructed and lived in. But in the same way that they were constructed as exemplars of consumption, in the way they were furnished, decorated and equipped, so they were placed as signifiers in a non-historical context with the other dwellings in the 'Village'. The overwhelming absence in the 'Village' and in the Exhibition in general is the sense of anything communitarian. Though they stand next to

each other, the houses are individualised. Because each is an 'ideal home', and not real, to be viewed separately from the dwelling standing next to it, the social disparity signified by the scale and degree of luxury of one dwelling compared with another that exists in the real world is masked and made to appear natural. The Exhibition actually held together the contradictions so that Margate Sherman's 'Unity House' furnished on £500 was an example of the 'ideal' just as was the 'Georgian House'<sup>17</sup>. While there may have been many visitors who were unable to afford the houses in the 'Village' or even many of the goods that were on display for sale, they could always buy one of the gadgets on the many stalls. Purchasing was, as David Clendon said, an important part of participating in the marvel of it all, so that the gadget you took away allowed you to 'be a partaker of the dream'<sup>18</sup>. For the Exhibition was not some external signifier like a vacuum cleaner that ostensibly resolved the contradictions of domestic labour, it was something that the visitor participated in, and thus participated in a ritual of the ideological apparatus. If ultimately the 'ideal home' was represented as a space from which consumption had banished domestic labour, and the acquired significations of consumption had created social identity, then the Exhibition bound its audience into the labour-process in order to purchase these signifying objects. The *Ideal Home*, with its notion of an 'ideal home' which it cast into numerous material representations, was the myth that effaced the contradictions in the relations of consumption.

The aim of this thesis had been to explore how the *Daily Mail Ideal Home Exhibition's* representations intervened in the politics and definitions of the home. It has argued that, while the Exhibition did not promote a particular philosophical or aesthetic ideal of home, through its representations it addressed its visitors as consuming subjects and defined the 'ideal home' as a site of consumption. The Exhibition functioned as an Ideological State Apparatus that sustained the ruling hegemony while the contradictions of class and gender were naturalised by its representations. There are many other ways the Exhibition could be explored and examined. The twentieth century witnessed the development of the Garden

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<sup>17</sup> See pages 161 and 242.

<sup>18</sup> See page 90.

City movement, and many have considered the 'ideal home' to be part of a communal project. The absence of any response to the desire to build a 'New Jerusalem' that emerged during the war are but two aspects of the whole absence of a social dimension that could be explored. For many visitors the Exhibition was a vast display of gadgets, many of which could be purchased at the stalls that constituted its 'market', and this is another area that could be evaluated. At a theoretical level Baudrillardian ideas about the collapse of the real with the imaginary could be used to explore the notion of the 'ideal home' as could Lefebvre's conceptualisation of 'everyday life'. While it has been argued here that the Exhibition sustained consumer capitalism and the politics of the Right, it could also be investigated as paving the way for Thatcherism where consumption became elevated to being a political act.

However, although the interest here has had political dimension, this has not been with national politics but how the Exhibition's politics and representations were an intervention in the production of the postwar home. The words adopted by the Exhibition from the speech by King George V to the Church Assembly, 'the foundations of the National Glory are set in the homes of the people' were an appropriation or colonisation of the home. While the Exhibition was an exposition of how people might change and improve their homes, its representations were colonising ideological constructs that recruited domestic space for developing patterns of consumption. But not only was the Exhibition a nationally significant institution that promoted consumer capitalism, it was an institution that legitimated the position of the ruling class and positioned and constructed the consuming home within an idealised, and essentially hegemonic, view of the life of the Nation.

**APPENDIX 1**  
**Postwar attendance figures**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Total Attendance</b>	
1947	1,111,024	
1948	1,060,295	
1949	1,248,486	
1950	1,090,117	
1951	1,168,073	
1952	1,025,315	
1953	1,187,389	
1954	1,034,058	
1955	1,315,000	
1956	1,061,329	
1957	1,329,644	
1958	1,321,461	
1959	1,229,977	
1960	1,164,367	
1961	1,100,098	
1962	1,092,465	
1963	1,034,835	
1964	1,122,656	
1965	1,128,123	
1966	1,038,885	
1967	No figures published	
1968	No figures published	
1969	845,743	Year of electricians strike, and the Exhibition was
1970	1,003,508	held for only 16 instead of 23 days.
1971	1,011,972	
1972	960,369	
1973	845,577	Railway strike & work to rule for 15 of the 23 days
1974	901,274	
1975		
1976	706,924	

These figures have been collected from a variety of sources. Mostly they are published in the *Daily Mail* a few days after the closure of the Exhibition. However, the figure for

1966 was not publicised until 1970. No reason was given for omitting to publish the 1967 and 1968 figures; the suspicion is that the total may have fallen below one million for the first time since the war. The poor figure caused by the 1969 electrician's strike would have enabled release without having to suggest there was a decline in attendance.

## SOURCES OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure 1: Plan of *Britain Can Make It* Exhibition: *Sparke 1986a*

Figure 2: Plan of 1951 Daily Mail Ideal Home Exhibition Grand Hall: *Exhibition Catalogue 1951*.

Illustration 1: 1948 Experimental two-story 'Aluminium House': *Archive of Art and Design, Victoria and Albert Museum*.

Illustration 2: The 1947 'Scottwood House': *Archive of Art and Design, Victoria and Albert Museum*.

Illustration 3: The 1947 'Scottwood House' kitchen: *Archive of Art and Design, Victoria and Albert Museum*.

Illustration 4: The 1947 'Scottwood House' kitchen: *Archive of Art and Design, Victoria and Albert Museum*.

Illustration 5: Advertisement for the 1947 'Tarren-Newland House': *Exhibition Catalogue 1947*.

Illustration 6: Double page of *Woman's Journal* on furnishing the 'Wates' House': *Woman's Journal March 1947*.

Illustration 7: The 1948 'Traditional House': *Archive of Art and Design, Victoria and Albert Museum*.

Illustration 8: The 1951 'W.I. House' parlour: *Archive of Art and Design, Victoria and Albert Museum*.

Illustration 9: The 1951 'W.I. House' kitchen: *Archive of Art and Design, Victoria and Albert Museum*.

Illustration 10: Kitchen layouts proposed in the Dudley Report: *The Design of Dwellings HMSO 1944*.

Illustration 11: Pleydell-Bouverie's plans of 'the house that women want': *Pleydell-Bouverie 1944*.

Illustration 12: The ground floor plan of the 1951 W.I. House: *Archive of Art and Design, Victoria and Albert Museum*.

Illustration 13: 1951 Exhibition Catalogue advertisement for the Jackson 'Giant' Cooker: *Exhibition Catalogue 1951*.

Illustration 14: 1951 Exhibition Catalogue advertisement for Morris of Glasgow: *Exhibition Catalogue 1951*.

Illustration 15: The Lounge of the 1951 'Berg House': *Archieve of Art and Design, Victoria and Albert Museum.*

Illustration 16: Kitchen of the 1951 'Unity House': *Archieve of Art and Design, Victoria and Albert Museum.*

Illustration 17: The 1951 Daily Mail 'Ideal Home Kitchen': *Archieve of Art and Design, Victoria and Albert Museum.*

Illustration 18: The 1953 'Davis House': *Daily Mail Book of House Plans 1953.*

Illustration 19: Plan of the 1953 'Davis House': *Daily Mail Book of House Plans 1953.*

Illustration: 20 *Daily Mail* Competition for the 1953 Exhibition: *Daily Mail 4 March 1953.*

Illustration 21: Richard Hamilton's Just What Is It That Makes Today's Homes So Different, So Appealing? *Hughes 1991.*

Illustration 22: Kitchen in the 'House of the Future': *Archieve of Art and Design, Victoria and Albert Museum.*

Illustration 23: Lounge in the 'House of the Future': *Archieve of Art and Design, Victoria and Albert Museum.*

Illustration 24: Eating bar in the 1956 'Berg Surrey House': *Daily Mail Book of House Plans 1956*

Illustration 25: Plan of the 'Berg Surrey House': *Daily Mail Book of House Plans 1956*

Illustration 26: : 'Allday' windows of the 1956 'Berg Surrey House': *Archieve of Art and Design, Victoria and Albert Museum.*

Illustration 27: Advertisement for the 1959 'Unity Britannia Mews': *Exhibition Catalogue 1959.*

Illustration 28: *Woman's Realm* interiors for the 'Unity Britannia Mews': *Woman's Realm March 1959*

Illustration 29: *Woman's Realm* interiors for the 'Unity Britannia Mews': *Woman's Realm March 1959*

Illustration 30: No expense spared kitchen designed by *Ideal Home* magazine: *Ideal Home February 1961.*

Illustration 31: Dining-room of the 1959 'Davis House' designed by *Woman's Own*: *Woman's Own February 1959*.

Illustration 32: Kitchen of the 1958 'Crouch House' designed by *Woman's Own*: *Woman's Own February 1958*

Illustration 33: View of the 'Village' in 1957: *Archieve of Art and Design, Victoria and Albert Museum*.

Illustration 34: View of the 'Village' in 1957, opposite side: *Archieve of Art and Design, Victoria and Albert Museum*.

Illustration 35: Plan of the 1961 'Berg Ranch House': *Daily Mail Book of House Plans 1961*.

Illustration 36: Dining area and kitchen of the 1961 'Berg Ranch House': *Archieve of Art and Design, Victoria and Albert Museum*.

Illustration 37: Interior of the 1957 'Crouch Convertible House': *Archieve of Art and Design, Victoria and Albert Museum*.

Illustration 38: View of the 'Village of Beginning Again' in 1947: *Archieve of Art and Design, Victoria and Albert Museum*.

Illustration 39: 'Palace of Fontainebleau' 1958 'Golden Jubilee' Exhibition: *Ryan 1997*.

Illustration 40: Close-up of the decorative mural of the opening of the 1947 Exhibition: (*Enlarged from Illustration 38*) *Archieve of Art and Design, Victoria and Albert Museum*.

Illustration 41: 'An Englishman's home is his castle' spectacle of 1956 Exhibition: *Ryan 1997*.

Illustration 42: Catalogue drawing of the 'Tudor' village in 1962 Exhibition gardens: *Exhibition Catalogue 1962*.

Illustration 43: The 1960 'Georgian House' Exhibition spectacle: *Ryan 1997*.

Illustration 44: James Gardiner's 1948 design for 'The Seven Ages of Woman': *Archieve of Art and Design, Victoria and Albert Museum*.

Illustration 45: Gas exhibit at 'The Seven Ages of Woman': *Archieve of Art and Design, Victoria and Albert Museum*.



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