

THE FRANCO-BRITISH UNION OF ARCHITECTS

NEWSLETTER

INCLUDING REPORT
ON REUNION IN PARIS 1971
TO CELEBRATE 50th ANNIVERSARY

November 1971

FRANCO BRITISH UNION OF ARCHITECTS

President: Henri Jacques Le Meme
Vice President:)
Secretary General:) Clive Pascall

French Committee

G. Benoit
R. Bodecher
F. Carpentier
P. Devinoy
J. Dorian
H. Le Meme
F. Papillard Charpy
E. Popesco
P. Roux Dorlut
M. Tournon Branly

British Committee

A. Brandreth
E. Caldicott
P. Campbell-Jones
J. Ellis
G. Epstein
D. Goldfinch
Sir Gilbert Inglefield
C. Pascall
J. Ratcliff
D. Waterhouse
G. Whitby
P. Wills
O. Winter

Joint Committee Meeting

On the 3rd and 4th December 1970 the French Committee visited London and met with the British Committee to discuss the changes that were occurring in the profession and in architectural education on both sides of the Channel. The situation in France appears to be as follows:-

Since the student revolution in 1968, architectural schools have been developing individually. There is no control by the profession on entry, no centralised inspection, each school is autonomous. Students receive little if any financial help from the Government.

(Architectural Design described in its September 71 issue the story of the Ecole des Beaux Arts from 1968. This is an exciting and well illustrated edition and highly recommended).

The profession in France is in similar trouble to that in England. There, the Government has called M. Peyra to make an independent report on the profession. Like our Monopolies Commission he reported without consulting architects. Monopoly is as repugnant to the French Government as it is to ours but M. Peyra and his government are finding it difficult to reconcile an open profession, uncontrolled fees and high quality of service.

Professional liability in France would seem to be more onerous than in Britain and responsibility generally lasts longer, in theory passing to family and descendants. There, however, insurance is compulsory and can only be done through one company. The maximum cover is 2 million NF and if higher cover is required "complimentary" insurance is taken out by the contractor to cover his own and the architects' responsibilities. In this case the job has to receive independent technical inspection.

Cinquantenaire Medallions

We hold a number of replicas of the medallion that was presented to the President at the Cinquantenaire. These are available for purchase through the Secretary, George Whitby, 14 North Audley Street, London W.1. at £2.50p each. Both at the AGM and the Banquet, French and British Members wore their medallions (necklace fashion) and it is hoped that this may become a tradition.

Sherry Party

A sherry party is planned to be held in London on the 18th January at the Nash House Club. We are hoping that it may coincide with the visit of the French Committee. The cost will be £1.00 per head and as numbers may have to be restricted you are asked to fill in the enclosed application form as soon as possible. George Whitby will deal with acceptances in strict rotation. A guest may be brought if numbers allow.

1972 Reunion

Norwich has been approved as the venue. The Reunion will be held there over May 18th to 22nd May. Visits are provisionally planned to the London Brick Company Works for lunch during the journey from the airport to Norwich, a day in that city under the guidance of David Percival visiting new and old buildings and the pedestrian shopping streets, visits to the University of East Anglia, Blickling and Oxburgh Halls, as well as new buildings in the surrounding countryside. Accommodation has been reserved in the Royal Hotel, Norwich. It is hoped to hold the banquet in the Castle adjacent to the galleries containing some of the greatest pictures of the Norwich School. Further particulars will be issued in due course.

MINUTES of the 42nd Annual General Meeting held
on the Yacht "BordeFretigny", Paris, on Thursday
May 27th, 1971

Before the proceedings commenced, the President announced the death of Messieurs Jean Bidault, Fernand Rimbart, Maurice Boutterin, Gaston Castel and Pierre Lotte, all French members, and Mr. C.W.J. Smeed, British member. The Members stood in silence for a few moments in their memory.

1. THE MINUTES of the 41st Annual General Meeting held in Oxford on the 14th May 1970, having been distributed in French and English were duly approved and signed by the President.

2. Election of President and Vice President for the year 1971/72

Monsieur Henri Jacques Le Meme was proposed as President and Mr Clive Pascall as Vice-President for the year 1971/72. The elections were carried with acclamation. Sir Gilbert Inglefield then gave up the Chair to Monsieur Le Meme who thanked the members for his election and also those who had taken so much trouble to organise the Conference and made it such a success.

3. To mark the occasion of the Cinquantenaire the French Section had most generously had a medal struck - a special one for the President, and replicas were made available to all members.

4. The Secretary General then presented to the new President a bound copy of the Historical Notes of the F.B.U.A. compiled by Colonel Owen Campbell-Jones, Secretary General from 1962 to 1970, on the occasion of the Cinquantenaire, and copies were also made available in French and English to members present.

5. Report from the Honorary Secretary of the French Section

Monsieur Andre Remonet spoke on behalf of Madame Elena Popesco and reported the activities of the French Committee since the Reunion in Oxford last year, which had been very much appreciated by all members. He proposed the election of the following new British Members and Honorary Members:-

Philip Bennett
Wilfred Galloway
Michael Keyte
Leonard Morphil (student)
John Thornton

Honorary Members

Louis Mollet
Colonel Owen Campbell-Jones

6. Report from the Honorary Secretary of the British Section

Mr George Whitby mentioned the Joint Meeting of the British and French Committees held in London in December 1970 at which many subjects of mutual interest were discussed. These included the possible effect of the reference of the architectural profession in the U.K. to the Monopolies Commission and their Scale of Charges to the Prices and Incomes Board. He also referred to a Meeting at the RIBA in the Spring held jointly by the RIBA, ARCUK and Members of the Liaison Committee of Architects of the Common Market. He again suggested that consideration should be given to future activities covering special fields of architectural interest in addition to the Annual Reunions.

He then proposed the election of French Members and one Honorary Member as follows:-

Hugues Hertz
Jacques Perrin Fayolle

Honorary Member

Lucien Prieur (Ancien Inspecteur General des Monuments
Historiques)

He noted with regret the resignation of the following French Members:-

Michael Dameron
Raymond Torne
Alfred Jenkins
Charles Fabre

Mr Whitby then proposed a vote of thanks to all those concerned with the organisation of the Reunion on the occasion of the Cinquantenaire.

7. Next Annual General Meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting should be held in Norwich on 18th/22nd May, 1972, and the matter was referred to the Secretaries to make the necessary arrangements.

Some sixty British members and their guests arrived at Le Bourget on Thursday 27th May for the 1971 Reunion in Paris and to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the foundation of the Union. French members turned out in force to meet and escort us to the hotels Lutetia and l'Avenir. The first official engagement was a reception at the Hôtel de Ville by M. Jean Cherioux, Président du Conseil de Paris, who graciously welcomed the delegates in his elegant parlour. After equally gracious replies and thanks from M. Jacques Le Mème and Sir Gilbert Inglefield, respectively Presidents elect and retiring, the cordial atmosphere was suitably stimulated with champagne and caviare. There followed a swift tour of the elaborate halls of the building and some confusion and entanglement with a conference of mayors, not to mention a business efficiency exhibition.

The evening functions started with the Annual General Meeting on board the yacht Borde Fretigny moored alongside the left bank of the Seine. M. Henri Jacques Le Mème was duly elected President of the Union for 1971-72 and an appropriate highlight for the occasion was the presentation of a President's medal to commemorate the 50th Anniversary. This had been organised by the French and replicas of this well designed memento are available on sale to members. The assembled company was saddened to recall the loss during the past year of two good friends of the Union, M. Fernand Rimbart, O.B.E., and M. Pierre Lotte, an eminent member of the Compagnie des Architectes en Chef des Monuments Historiques.

Having dealt with the A.G.M. formalities the ship cast off and cruised down the Seine while its cheerful company enjoyed a delicious 'buffet rustique'. Darkness had fallen by the time the 'Borde Fretigny' made its turn up stream and through the heart of the city - magnificent in its floodlit glow - past the Ile de la Cité and St Louis and under the statue of St Genevieve on her bridge to a point some way beyond the Gare d'Austerlitz. Then to turn again past Notre Dame shining like carved ivory above the spring foliage after release from the soot of ages thanks to the care and attention of confrère Vitry. Certainly this was a splendid and romantic interlude for the start of the week-end and was experienced for the first time by many of the Parisiens in the party!

Friday morning saw an early visit to the new UNESCO building where M.Zerfuss met us at the entrance, giving lucid explanations of the difficulties of a narrow site and how these had been solved by considerable excavation to give 3 storeys below ground as well as the 8 storeys above. Large courtyards dispelled the effect and disadvantages of below ground accommodation and one of them had been modified in concept to receive a metal statue by Giacometti of a walking man which dominates wide spaces of paving and only a small shrub bed in one corner, towards which he appears to be heading. The building was remarkable for a number of mixed reasons - some very original detailing and handling of a spiral staircase, immense panels of glass to the restaurant which must be about 30 ft. high, stove enamelled and shaped aluminum external panels around windows, an extraordinary Venezuelan art contribution of dizzy-making vertical rods in the entrance hall and a strange structural mixture of reinforced concrete and exposed steelwork. Altogether it was a refreshing change from the original UNESCO building - perhaps the result of one guiding hand rather than divided responsibility.

From the confined streets around this quarter we were transported to the wide open spaces of the Parc des Princes stadium. This modern Colosseum presents a superb example of the French national skill in handling concrete. The scale is tremendous. M.J. Taillibert, the architect, explained the strict programming of the job whose main structural elements consist of

huge upward curving R.C. ribs forming 12 bays and extending great 45M hollow cantilevers sloping down to receive linking hollow R.C. box units which make up the inner elliptical perimeter of the metal covered roof. These units will contain internal walkways and all the illumination, T.V. and communication gear. The Stadium will accommodate 55,000 people and it seemed to be 'doing it the hard way' to have to build it over a ring-road.

Rather overwhelmed by that vast engineering feat we found the drive through the freshness of the Bois de Boulogne doubly welcome. And this took us to the Musée des Arts et Traditions Populaires, a most agreeable building recently completed and still being fitted out. Eight upper floors are to house ethnographic research offices and in the lower public part there were enough showcases already arranged to give us a fascinating display of everyday tools, implements and "things" from ancient to modern. The auditorium was a real treat in interior design imparting as it did a tranquil atmosphere (even though the upholstery was bright red) and a suitable mood of relaxation in which to enjoy a superb film of Versailles in autumn tints. This was remarkable for skilful photography from a helicopter, resulting in close up views of sculpture not normally seen in detail, and real artistry in seemingly penetrating the drenching heart of the extravagant fountain groups.

The party then retired to the nearby Pré Catalan - charmingly Edwardian in its leafy surroundings - for a delicious lunch including a special York ham dish in honour of the English. What remained of the afternoon was free until early evening when two busloads in full "tenue de soir" set off for the headquarters of the Academie d'Architecture at the Hôtel de Chaulnes in the Place des Vosges, where we took champagne at the invitation of M. Jacques Duhamel, Ministère des Affaires Culturelles, and had the opportunity of greeting old friends. There followed the Union's official banquet at the Hôtel de Béthune-Sully, one of the oldest and finest of the Paris hotels, beautifully restored and cared for by the Monuments Historiques. We dined at tables for eight in the splendid first floor rooms - centre pieces of sweet-peas and blue cornflowers lit by silver candelabras and a perfectly planned and prepared meal revealed the deft touch and direction of Madame la Presidente. Among the official guests were M. Michel Denieul, Directeur d'Architecture at the Ministère des Affaires Culturelles; Mr F. Tomlin, Director of the British Council in Paris and representing the Ambassador; M. Yves Malecot and M. Salusse, respectively President and Directeur de la Caisse des Monuments Historiques; M. Lamigeon, Président de la Fédération Nationale du Bâtiment; M. Guillaume Gillet, Président de l'Académie d'Architecture; M. Louis Noviant, Président de la Société des Architectes Diplômés par le Gouvernement and M. Robert Vassas who had been responsible for the restoration work in the Hôtel Béthune-Sully. The Union's President, M. Le Méme, delivered a charming speech that moved from words of welcome to a review of the Union's fifty years of existence and the bonds that sustain it. Toasts and other apt speeches for the Cinquantenaire concluded a memorable evening, except for some hardy spirits who accepted Marion Tournon-Branly's off-the-cuff invitation to look in on the Beaux Arts ball. Because of lack of password, or whatever magic token was required, there was some difficulty in getting in past the chuckers out, who were daubed and garbed or ungarbed as blackmoors, until we were smuggled in by Marion's students. Once inside it was decided that the generation gap is wiler than had been thought.

The late night probably had something to do with the rather poor opinion most of the confrères expressed for the hospital at Clamart which was the first brief stop on the Saturday tour of the western environs. However a huge concrete sculpture at the entrance by Adan went some way to offset disappointment. Touring the housing estates at Clamart (Architect: R. Auzelle) it was instructive to see the difference between the restricted budgets of the immediate post-war years and the luxurious standards of today - not always leading to the improvement in design which one might expect. It was interesting to see the softening effect of the mature

trees and planting in the early schemes and the layout in some of the recent low-rise work was excellent with each use of flowers. Our route passed on into the new factory estate at Velizy-Villacoublay where many works and office buildings presented restrained and well mannered architecture. Notable among these were the Mâtra laboratories, engineering department and plant (J.P. Evette, architect) where striking use had been made of "bronze" glass.

A long drive through Versailles brought us to the new town of Pontoise-Cergy. As yet it barely exists apart from its administrative heart - the Préfecture - which was the object of our visit. This remarkable building takes the form of an inverted ziggurat and shows an admirable consistency in the flavour of the design of its various parts - structure, finishes and furnishings. M. Henri Bernard, the architect, explained his scheme and left the visitors bemused by the fatness of the budgets that are obviously lavished on state administrative buildings. An excellent model of the new town showed the satisfying contrast between the Préfecture and a nearby tower block yet to be built to contain the administrative centre.

The afternoon was spent visiting the area on the western fringe of central Paris known as La Défense where an explanation was given of the difficulties and indecisions that arose over the handling of the end of the Champs Elysées - Etoile - Avenue de la Grande-Armée axis. Historically the development of the district goes back to le Nôtre and fifteen projects have been successively elaborated all showing the same idea - the extension of the axis. The final project, now well under way, eschews the temptation of a central monument or building, since this could mar the western vista of clear sky through the Arc de Triomphe, and sends the axial highway below a pedestrian platform of immense area. Each side of this are arising the powerful outlines of a huge commercial and residential complex open to both Paris and the world and now rapidly embracing the vast CNIT Exhibition Hall which was the subject of an FBUA visit some years ago. Many confrères were not reconciled by the superb views from the top of a 26-storey office block to the idea of a jungle of tall slabs flanking the end of le Nôtre's processional way, but a descent into the new Metro station showed that, underground at least, no design skills have been lost - splendid trains, platforms, escalators and a welcome moderation in advertising made the journey to l'Etoile most refreshing. The inevitable delays in rounding up scattered colleagues made many of us somewhat later than the polite 15 minutes at the houses of various kind friends who had invited us to dine, however, superb repasts in elegant surroundings soon restored flagging energies.

A late start for the Sunday programme was welcome and it was 11 a.m. before we gathered under the trees on the Ile de la Cité. Here, cradled in the very tip of the island - the oldest part of Paris - is the Monument à la Memoire des Deportés which is surely the most moving creation of its kind, equalled only perhaps by the larger Holocaust memorial in Jerusalem, to which it is in many ways inevitably linked. With deep feeling M. G.H. Pingusson delivered an account of his inspired conception - no proud monument but a crypt like a grave which the visitor must penetrate by descending into the very rock and, in so doing, divest himself of all earthly attachments to sense the agony of suffering and death endured by those taken from their homeland. Here contact with the world is lost in a confined environment where are visible but four elements - stone, sky, water and, at the end of a long dark passage, a small point of bright light signifying hope - the hope of 200,000 deported French men and women who never came back. A wreath of summer flowers - shining red, white and blue - was laid on the tomb of the Deporté Inconnue.

After the sadness of these wartime memories it was a relief to go up to the cheerful noise and bustle of Montmartre for a splendid buffet lunch at the Moulin de la Galette punctuated by impromptu dancing and

A leisurely walk through the quiet Sunday streets of the Marais filled the remainder of the afternoon. This district, rich with the old hotels of Paris, is receiving the expert attention of the Compagnie des Architectes en Chef des Monuments Historiques and the effect of the rescue operation can be seen by these charming buildings, either still in use as workshops or warehouses, in process of restoration or fully restored - a most satisfying operation. Suitable uses are found for these buildings; for instance the small Hôtel Guenegand de Brosse now houses the fascinating Musée de la Chasse which we visited. The grander Hôtel de Soubise, once the home of the Prince de Soubise et Rouen, contains national archives and restoration work is still in progress. The Musée de Paris has been for many years in the Hôtel Carnavalet - a fine 16th and 17th century building, much of it by François Mansart - and how elegant is the bronze statue of Louis XIV that stands in the courtyard whose walls are adorned with unique and delicate low-relief carvings by Jean Gougon.

The Hospitality of our French confreres was lavished on us once more at a reception at the Société des Architectes Diplômées par le Gouvernement, where we were received by the President, M. Louis Noviant. In the evening the French Committee kindly entertained their British counterparts at the Restaurant Dominique - a charming Russian establishment with walls lined with prints and bric-a-brac of considerable quality. Even that was not to be the end of the day which finally faded out after an amusing puppet show organized by French and British students in Marion Tournon's drawing office.

The proposed early Monday morning start was mercifully delayed and we were treated gently with a drive to le Val d'Yerres, a lovely stretch of country about 15 miles to the south-east of Paris chosen as the site for dormitory accommodation in a rural setting - complete with country sporting and recreational facilities and a fast line to the heart of the city. The great variety of accommodation, grouped in sympathetic association with fields and woods appeared to be a successful experiment and after cruising through this development a more detailed examination was made at the Centre Educatif et Culturel de Yerres. Here we were welcomed by Mayor Sanouiller - a stocky, ex-engine driver from Marseilles with a huge sense of earthy humour and a bluff manner that obviously extracted the impossible from higher authority for his adopted community. The Centre included a secondary school for 1200 pupils with restaurant, libraries, swimming-pool and other facilities forming a social centre for people of all ages.

In the final visit of the tour to the Préfecture de Creteil (Architects: D. Badani, P. Roux-Dorlut) the enormous wealth which is at the disposal of state architects in France was again evident in an astonishing acreage of stainless steel which even covered the roof of this huge building - all bronze glass and shiny. There were many features internally and externally which although original and ingenious, did not quite seem to hang together. The grass covered roof of an ancillary building; an assembly hall with two huge areas that rotated vertically to provide instant seating or open floor space as required; a miniature processional way from a helicopter pad with a concrete stairway ascending between cascades reminiscent of the Villa d'Este; an immense wall of mysterious dark steel in powerful relief, part of which rumbled to one side to reveal, not Hell itself, but an emulsion-painted passage seemingly leading to the lavatories. It is all there, and we sat down to lunch in the restaurant with a panoramic view of the vast job of landscaping this hard building into the rather unpromising terrain.

But these criticisms apart - due, as one member put it, to jealousy at not having such a lovely job himself - the visit was a fitting climax to a splendid week-end and one entirely worthy of the fifty years of happy unity which has sustained the Franco-British Union of Architects.

Patsy Wills

Therese Brandreth