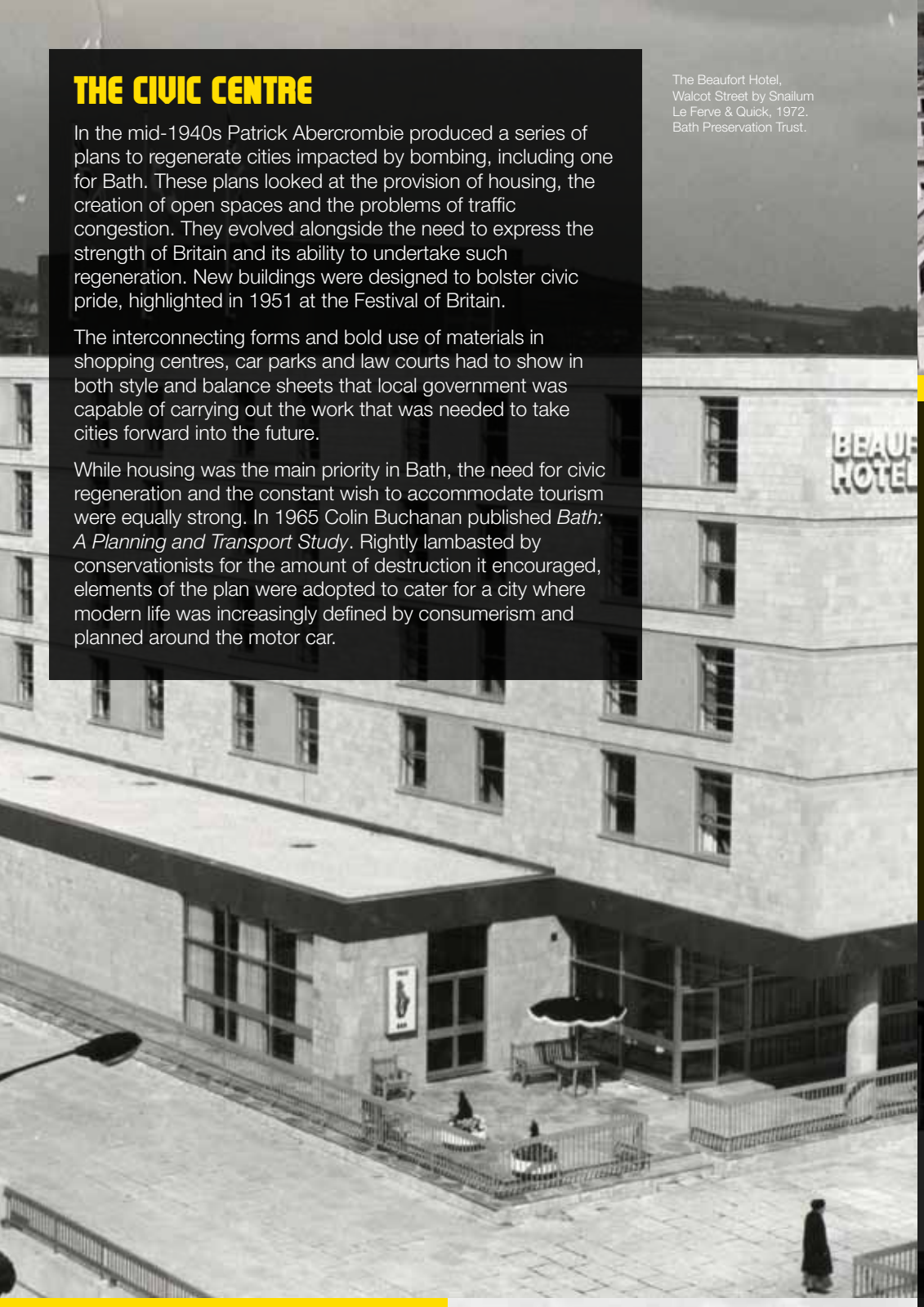
THE CIVIC CENTRE

In the mid-1940s Patrick Abercrombie produced a series of plans to regenerate cities impacted by bombing, including one for Bath. These plans looked at the provision of housing, the creation of open spaces and the problems of traffic congestion. They evolved alongside the need to express the strength of Britain and its ability to undertake such regeneration. New buildings were designed to bolster civic pride, highlighted in 1951 at the Festival of Britain.

The interconnecting forms and bold use of materials in shopping centres, car parks and law courts had to show in both style and balance sheets that local government was capable of carrying out the work that was needed to take cities forward into the future.

While housing was the main priority in Bath, the need for civic regeneration and the constant wish to accommodate tourism were equally strong. In 1965 Colin Buchanan published *Bath: A Planning and Transport Study*. Rightly lambasted by conservationists for the amount of destruction it encouraged, elements of the plan were adopted to cater for a city where modern life was increasingly defined by consumerism and planned around the motor car.

The Beaufort Hotel, Walcot Street by Snailum Le Ferve & Quick, 1972. Bath Preservation Trust.



The University of Bath Campus, designed by RMJM Partners 1967-80. Bath in Time/Bath Central Library.

A MODERN EDUCATION

The 1944 Education Act promised a free and universal system of education for all and by the mid-1960s the desire to have a non-selective system, the introduction of comprehensive schools and the creation of more university places saw a period of optimism in education. This optimism created the opportunity for new buildings where bold, avant-garde design could flourish.

Alison and Peter Smithson's 1949 design for Hunstanton School in Norfolk became a model on which many primary and secondary schools would be based. But it was in the design of further and higher education buildings, large in scale and complex in function, where striking combinations of materials, form and landscape emerged.

In heritage cities such as Oxford and Cambridge there had been a long tradition of stylistic change in educational buildings. In Bath, where change had occurred mostly within the same stylistic idiom of Classicism, new educational buildings were a bold breakaway. At Bath Technical College with great controversy, and at the University of Bath with great verve, the forms and ideals of Brutalism were combined with the materials and landscape of the city.

BUILDING COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY

As the second half of the 20th century progressed Britain became a consumer society and the world of business and high finance flourished. Commerce and industry became dominant forces in towns and cities, expressed through new buildings that were modern in design and often expensive in construction.

One of the fundamental ideals of modernism was the need to strip away decoration and show the structural integrity of a building, in many ways following the same principles as the Neo-Classicists of the late 18th century. Functionalism was essential, creating buildings that celebrated structure, showing the way a building worked and using materials that were innovative and adaptable.

The world of industry was ideally suited for such architecture, as industrial buildings by their very nature had their form dictated by their function. Bath was no exception and perhaps the two most successful buildings from the 1950-70s in the city are the two factories built on Lower Bristol Road for the production of furniture for the modern home and office.

Bath Cabinet Makers, by Lower Bristol Road, designed by Yorke Rosenberg Mardell 1966-7. RIBA Library Photographs Collection.

THE LEGACY OF BRUTAL BATH

As the 1970s drew to a close, architects were increasingly turning to more familiar forms and traditional materials, expressed through a more human scale in what would became known as Post-Modernism. Yet the basic ideals of Brutalism and the architects who championed it in many ways remained.

Brutalism evolved as the realities of life in post-war Britain inspired a freedom of expression through all forms of creativity, including architecture. It was uncompromising, unlike anything that had come before it, and came to define the nation. It was not restricted to rules of symmetry or governed by the weight of history; it stripped architecture back to its core principles, was adaptable in form and finish, and centred on how a building worked and what place it had in society.

While the architecture of the post-war city may not be viewed as 'Bath' in its style, the buildings of post-war Bath are unquestionably British. Some did not last, while others endure, but whether successful or not, loved or hated, valued or ignored, these buildings were created out of the opportunity for architects to be innovative and with the desire, as with all stylistic change, to create architecture undeniably of its time.

Pulteney Weir in 1973, constructed 1969-73. Bath in Time/Private Collection.

BRUTALBATH

EXPLORE THE POST-WAR ARCHITECTURE OF BATH

A map revealing some of the highs (and lows) of public, educational and industrial post-war architecture in Bath

Britain faced many challenges in the aftermath of the Second World War. The country needed to move forward, to regenerate and to do that it needed new buildings. In the late 1940s a new architectural style began to emerge that aimed to take modern Britain into the future.

Taking inspiration from pre-war Modernism, the buildings of the 1950s–70s were defined by an austere, bold and uncompromising style of architecture, developed by young, passionate and idealistic architects. The style became known as Brutalism.

For Bath this new style was perhaps even more brutal than for many other cities. The number of buildings that can be heralded as great monuments of the period are few and the architects who rose to the challenge of designing new forms in the historic city fewer still. So while Post-War Bath is not celebrated for its outstanding architecture, the buildings stand out, and whether they are liked or loathed, Brutal Bath deserves to be understood for the needs and the ideals of the period of British architecture that it represents.

Map produced by the Building of Bath Collection following the exhibition **Brutal Bath: Building the Post-War City** 11 May – 26 November 2013.

What about housing?

To find out more about the history of post-war housing in Bath why not read:

Produced by the Museum of Bath at work.

For more information visit www.bath-at-work.org.uk

Cover: City of Bath College by Sir Frederick Gibberd 1957-63. Bath in Time/ Private Collection.

BUILDING OF BATH COLLECTION

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LOTTERY FUNDED

1 Walcot Street

A major project to emerge from Colin Buchannan's *Bath: A Planning and Transport Study* in 1965 was the (unrealised) proposal to create an east-west relief road by building a tunnel underneath the centre of Bath from Walcot Street to New King Street.

2 Hilton Hotel

As part of the Buchanan plans, the southern end of Walcot Street was to be redeveloped to include a multi-storey car park, offices, residential apartments, new law courts and a new hotel. The Beaufort Hotel (now the Hilton) was built in 1972, designed by the firm of Snailum, LeFerve and Quick.

3 The Podium

The redevelopment of Walcot Street in the 1960s included the proposal for the empty Podium on Northgate Street to be the site of new law courts. From 1970 architect Leonard Manasseh developed this design, taking inspiration from the temple forms of Classical antiquity. The design was to be concrete clad and articulated by 8 large columns. It was rejected in 1974 and the current post-modern building (Waitrose supermarket) was constructed in 1987-9.

4 New Bond Street

Part of the Buchanan plan of 1965 was the idea to create a cutting below New Bond Street for traffic to get from Walcot street car park to Queen Square. This proposal drawing shows the traffic visible below the street and shop level. It was never built.

Bath in Time/Private Collection

5 Pulteney Weir

The successful flood prevention scheme of the late 1960s created one of the most impressive modern interventions into the historic fabric of Bath, the new weir below Pulteney Bridge. The accompanying radial gate included a podium originally intended to be the location for a new restaurant with views across the river.

University of Bath Archives

6 University of Bath

The 1965 development proposal for the University of Bath advocated a linear plan that could be extended on all sides as the institution grew. Fundamental to the design by RMJM & Partners was the elevation of people to upper 'decks', while all traffic and services were contained on the ground level. The spine of the complex is the Parade, a central walkway connecting all departments and accessed from various places. Image courtesy of the University of Bath Archives

7 Model of the proposed Bath and Portland Stone Building

Proposed in 1966 to be constructed at the end of Kingston Buildings, this design is perhaps post-war Bath at its most inconsiderate. The vertical fins of the design were no doubt partly inspired by the Perpendicular windows of the Abbey. If the location by the south side of the Abbey were not inappropriate enough, the height of the building would have dominated neighbouring York Street.

Bath in Time – Bath Central Library

8 Southgate Shopping Centre

The scheme that most damaged public opinion of post-war architecture in Bath was the Southgate Shopping Centre by the Owen Luder Partnership 1969-72. Built following the mass demolition of the original east side of Southgate, the blocky roofline and combation of materials made it a development that was criticised by both the public and members of the architectural profession.

RIBA Library Photograph Collection

9 City of Bath College

Designed 1957-63 by Sir Frederick Gibberd the city of Bath College building (now greatly altered) was one of the earliest examples of post-war architecture in Bath. The projecting lecture theatre on the front was praised by some, but the height and size of the main building was a shocking intervention in the city.

10 Kingsmead House and Telephone Exchange

Designed in 1963 by S. Frost for the Ministry of Works this building is basic in design, and hugely inappropriate in height, it was approved without question on condition that concrete panels on the elevations were replaced with Bath stone. The slightly later neighbouring Telephone Exchange building on Monmouth Street attempted to use Bath materials but with similar uninspiring results.

RIBA Library Photograph Collection

11 Herman Miller Factory

The 1977 Herman Millar factory designed by Farrell Grimshaw Partnership is perhaps one of the most successful of Bath's post-war buildings. The hollow steel frame is clad with panels of glass reinforced polyester, which along with doors and window panels can be moved around easily making the building extremely flexible and adaptable. It was listed grade II in 2013.

Matthew Wickens

12 Rotork Building

Leonard Manasseh worked on various schemes for Jeremy Fry's Rotork factory including this extension of 1966, renowned for its triodetic roof – a structural frame of repeated triangular modules held up by just two columns, which raises up to glazed pyramids. The Bath Stone cladding was a request of the city planners.

13 Bath Cabinet Makers Factory

Planned as a single space so that a continuous flow of production from the factory to the loading bay could be achieved, the 1967 BCM factory by Yorke Rosenberg Mardell is comprised of a single flat roof slab supported by two grids interconnected by steel tubes. It was listed in 2008.

Matthew Wickens

14 Haycombe Crematorium Chapel

Mervyn Seal designed the Haycombe Crematorium while working for the Bath Planning office on 1956. Made up of two interconnecting blocks, the crematorium chapel and the chimney, the design takes advantage of the sweeping landscape views from the chapel seen through the cantilevered glass wall.

Bath City Centre