

**Impact case study (REF3b)**

<p><b>Institution:</b> University of Warwick</p>
<p><b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 34 Art and Design: History, Practice and Theory</p>
<p><b>Title of case study:</b> Preserving Britain's Architectural Heritage: Sir Basil Spence and post-war British architecture</p>
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b> (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>Campbell's research on Basil Spence has delivered a reassessment of the work and significance of one of Britain's most important post-war architects after nearly three decades of critical neglect. The impacts include informing the strategies of Historic Scotland and English Heritage for listing and conserving historic buildings; and increasing public knowledge and appreciation of Spence's contribution to modern British architecture. These impacts have been delivered to research users - the heritage sector, managers and users of Spence's buildings, and the general public - via public engagement activities which comprised a touring exhibition, public lectures, workshops and non-academic conferences; popular publications; and advice to heritage organisations.</p>
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b> (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>Campbell (at Warwick 1977 to present) has conducted research into the life, work and achievements of Sir Basil Spence and his team of architects and designers in England and Scotland from 1931 to 1976. Through a combination of archival research (focused on the collection of drawings, designs, office papers, press-cuttings and photographs at the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland) architectural analysis and oral history (interviewing Spence's former associates, assistants and partners), the research documented Spence's architectural achievements, analysed his buildings, provided attribution of particular buildings to individual designers, charted the way his practice operated and assessed his role as an advocate for his profession. The research has resulted in a new understanding of twentieth-century British architecture since Spence's key role in the post-war reconstruction of Britain had been previously under-researched and under-appreciated. It revealed that Spence's vivid architectural symbolism made him a popular choice for government and private clients, and showed that as an 'Establishment Modern', he represented an important middle way between avant-garde and traditional modes of design at a time of profound change in British society.</p> <p>The research demonstrated Spence's role as a pioneer of site-specific works of art for his buildings. It also re-assessed the nature of the architectural profession in the modern era. It is generally assumed that architects are responsible for every design emerging from their office. However, Campbell has revealed that Spence's partners made significant contributions to the design process, as well as the considerable creative role of young assistants in his London and Edinburgh offices, thereby demonstrating that architecture is a collaborative profession. The research was completed by conducting interviews with members of Spence's practice, thus clarifying his own design process, and the roles played by other members of his office. The research also produced a re-evaluation of Spence's term as RIBA President during which he made adroit use of the media to sustain the role of the architect in an era of developer-led architecture.</p> <p>Campbell has been conducting research on twentieth-century British architecture and Spence since the 1980s. Her 1996 monograph on the design and construction of Coventry Cathedral, one of the most important post-war buildings in Britain, led her to investigate the broader career of the cathedral's architect, Basil Spence. Much of the research underpinning this impact was also carried out as part of an AHRC-funded project, <i>The life and work of Sir Basil Spence 1907-76</i> which ran from 2004-2008. The research was conducted by Professor Campbell, PI, Co-I Professor Miles Glendinning (later Director of the Scottish Centre for Conservation Studies at the Edinburgh College of Art), Co-I Jane Thomas, Curator of Architectural Collections, RCAHMS, Project Fellows, Dr David Walker and Dr Clive Fenton, PhD student Sarah Walford.</p>

**3. References to the research** (indicative maximum of six references)

- 'Shaping the sacred: Spence as church-builder' in *Basil Spence Architect*, ed. P. Long and J. Thomas (National Galleries of Scotland, 2007), pp. 62-75.
- "'Drawing a new map of learning": Spence and the University of Sussex' in *Basil Spence Architect*, ed. P. Long and J. Thomas (National Galleries of Scotland, 2007), pp. 96-103.
- 'Building on the Backs: Basil Spence and Queens College Cambridge', *Architectural History* vol. 49 (2011) pp. 383-405 [peer reviewed; REF2].
- Campbell, Glendinning & Thomas, *Basil Spence: Buildings and Projects* (RIBA Publishing, 2012).
- *Coventry Cathedral: art and architecture in post-war Britain* (Clarendon Studies in the History of Art, no. 16, Oxford University Press, 1996).
- 'Architecture, war and peace: Coventry Cathedral and the arts of reconstruction', *Reconciling People: Coventry Cathedral's story*, ed. C. Lamb (Canterbury Press, 2011), pp. 1-32.

*Evidence of Research Quality: Basil Spence: Buildings and Projects* was shortlisted for the Society of Architectural Historians' Alice Davis Hitchcock Prize 2012 for outstanding contribution to the literature of architectural history and for the William MB Berger Prize for British Art History 2013 awarded by the Berger Collection Educational trust (Denver, Co.) and *The British Art Journal*. The Berger prize judges described it thus: 'This elegantly produced book is hugely impressive and to the point, filling in much invaluable material and making sense of 20th-century Modernism in Britain and the place of Spence within it. An example to all of how to combine several contributions into a whole, that was the product of a vast amount of research.'

*Research Grants:* AHRC Standard Research Grant, 'The life and work of Sir Basil Spence, 1907-76: architecture, tradition and modernity', PI Louise Campbell, £342,473, 2004-2008.

Additional funding for the publication of *Basil Spence: buildings and projects* was provided by: Historic Scotland (£2000), the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British art (£8000), Warwick University's Humanities Research Fund- Impact Award (£4000), the Scouloudi Foundation (£950), the Strathmartine Trust (£1000), the Society of Architectural Historians of Great Britain (SAHGB) (£200), the architectural firms MacCormac Jamieson Pritchard (£500) and Hopkins Associates (£500), and four individual architects (£1550).

**4. Details of the impact** (indicative maximum 750 words)

Research on the life and work of Sir Basil Spence has enhanced the understanding of modern British architecture, and benefited the heritage and conservation sectors. The team's research findings informed the decisions of Historic Scotland and English Heritage to propose statutory protection for Spence's buildings. The RCAHMS catalogue of the Spence Archive is more historically informed through knowledge sharing. Increased appreciation for Basil Spence, his buildings and twentieth-century architecture among contemporary users of his buildings and the public has been generated through a high-profile touring exhibition and a programme of public engagement activities including popular and online publications, workshops, talks, architectural tours, and non-academic conferences.

*Preserving Britain's built heritage:*

The research team has assisted bodies which document and conserve Britain's built heritage, resulting in the preservation of Spence's buildings. Fenton, Walker and Thomas provided key information to English Heritage which strengthened its plan to install a blue plaque at his former office and home at 1 Canonbury Place (23 March 2011). Fenton was retained as a consultant by Historic Scotland 2008-9, producing a report on all of Spence's unlisted buildings in Scotland. This report led directly to 10 new listings connected to Spence and his practice. Walford provided expert advice to a member of the Assessment team for Heritage Protection at English Heritage about Spence's Sydenham School which supported its recommendation for a grade II listing (declined by DCMS in 2010.) As a member of the CFCE's Fabric Advisory Committee for Coventry Cathedral

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(since 1998) Campbell 'supplied valuable historical information about Spence's design and about the ...crypt chapels to the Fabric Advisory Committee'. She also advised on ways of adapting the Cathedral to improve disabled access while preserving its architectural integrity. She advised Coventry's Diocesan Advisory Committee about proposed alterations to Spence's church of St Oswald, and has nominated this church for listing. She is now working with the Diocesan Advisory Committee's Church Buildings Officer to nominate other Spence-designed churches for listing. Her research on the Cathedral has been used by the World Monuments Fund in their campaign to repair the ruins of the medieval cathedral, and re-display the surviving stained glass. According to its Chief Executive, 'Campbell's research and publications on Coventry Cathedral have been of enormous use to the campaign. They have helped to inform our understanding of the symbolic importance of the ruins... and enhanced our understanding of the subtle relationship which Basil Spence devised between old and new cathedrals.'

Other contributions by the research team to the work of heritage organisations include talks about key Spence buildings to RCAHMS cataloguers. The team also provided information about Spence and his colleagues to the Dictionary of Scottish Architects from 2004-2012. Historic Scotland's booklet *Basil Spence* (2012) was significantly revised in its online form following input from Campbell and Thomas.

**Public Impact: Exhibitions:**

The research provided the intellectual underpinning for the acclaimed centenary exhibition, *Back to the Future: Sir Basil Spence 1907-76*, the first major exhibition of Spence's life and work, co-curated by the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art and Thomas (rated 5 stars, *The Guardian*). The research team advised on themes, helped choose the material for the exhibition, and wrote the exhibition panels and labels. The exhibition book, *Basil Spence Architect*, edited by Long and Thomas, included one essay each by Thomas and Fenton and two essays each by Campbell and Glendinning. 3,122 copies were sold. The exhibition was shown at Edinburgh (Dean Gallery, Oct. 2007-Feb. 2008; 29,000 visitors), London (RIBA, Mar-Apr. 2008; not recorded) and Coventry (the Herbert, May - Aug. 2008; 9,000 visitors). A smaller exhibition, *Basil's Bairns*, was held at the Royal Scottish Academy in January 2008 (10,750 visitors). Developed with Fenton, it examined how Spence's legacy was disseminated throughout the Scottish architectural profession by his Edinburgh partners and assistants.

**Public Impact: Workshops, conferences and public talks:**

The public impact of the research was extended through interactive events organised by RCAHMS as part of their Spence Archive project. Campbell, Glendinning, Walford and Walker provided expert knowledge at three workshops which involved the current users of Spence's buildings and used archival material to enhance participants' understanding of the physical environment. Soldiers at Hyde Park Barracks, London (workshop 1), and S2-S6 students at Thurso High School, Duncanrig Secondary School and Kilsyth Academy (workshop 2) created films reflecting their experiences of their surroundings and understanding of Spence's architectural vision. Workshop 3 at Coventry Cathedral for the congregation and those of Spence's three Coventry churches involved creating a Perspex sculpture inspired by Spence's use of light.

Conferences in 2008 (Edinburgh, Coventry and Rome) brought the research to the public, the architectural profession and heritage bodies. Talks by the research team, staff from English Heritage and Spence's office illuminated working life in Spence's practices and the social, cultural and architectural significance of his buildings in the UK and abroad. Campbell advised on Coventry Cathedral's exhibition 'Journey into the Light: the art treasure of Coventry Cathedral' (Sep-Oct 2012, co-curated by Walford) and on the Sir Basil Spence exhibition at Sussex University to mark their 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2012. She delivered public lectures at Coventry Cathedral (17 Oct. 2012), Sussex (23 May 2012; 200 people), the Ecclesiological Society, London, (17 Dec. 2012), V&A Museum, London, (25 Apr. 2012), the Twentieth Century Society, London, (7 Mar. 2013; 50 people), and to members of the Art Fund and the Friends of the Royal Academy (35 people) on their visits to Coventry (15 Oct. 2012 and 21 Mar. 2013).

**5. Sources to corroborate the impact** (indicative maximum of 10 references)

Media coverage: 'Architect's legacy faces rebuilding', *The Guardian*, 11 Jun. 2008.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2008/jun/11/communities.architecture>

Exhibition website: [www.basilspence.org.uk/exhibitions](http://www.basilspence.org.uk/exhibitions).

**Reviews:**

- *Apollo Magazine*, 28 Aug. 2008 (cached page available)
  - *Herald Scotland* described the Edinburgh exhibition as 'superb', 31 Jan. 2008.
  - *The Guardian* described it as 'this rich and accessible exhibition', 25 Oct. 2007.
- <http://www.theguardian.com/society/2008/jun/11/communities.architecture>
- *BBC Coventry and Warwickshire* (July 2008) described the Herbert exhibition as 'grand' and 'very warm and welcoming to people of all ages and people of all backgrounds'. It was 'highly recommended'.

*AHRC Standard Research Grant Final Report* (2009) confirms the project's academic outputs and their contributions to the NGS exhibition, English Heritage and Historic Scotland, and the contributions of heritage professionals and Spence's former colleagues to the non-academic conferences.

**Written statements**

- Senior Advisor, Church Buildings Council: 'In addition to drawing my attention to your paper on Spence as a church architect published in the catalogue on *Basil Spence Architect* (National Gallery of Scotland, 2008), you very kindly shared with me an extract from Chapter 6 of your then forthcoming book (with M. Glendinning and J. Thomas) on *Sir Basil Spence: Buildings and Projects*.... It was on this basis that my paper for the SAC [Statutory Advisory Committee on closed and closing churches] was written and subsequently endorsed by the SAC as a supporting document to its statutory advice on the church: advice that included an appreciation of the church [Saint Francis, Wythenshawe] as a heritage asset worthy of consideration for inclusion on the statutory list of national interest at Grade 2.'
- Chief Executive, World Monuments Fund Britain: 'In November 2011, WMF launched a campaign to raise funds to tackle the problems faced by the ailing ruins of Coventry's medieval cathedral.... Louise Campbell's research and publications on Coventry Cathedral have been of enormous use to the campaign.... Professor Campbell has supplied valuable historical information about Spence's design and about the twentieth-century furnishing of the crypt chapels to the Cathedrals Fabric Committee for England's Fabric Advisory Committee for Coventry Cathedral, on which she and I serve.... This information is proving especially useful in devising a scheme to reveal to the public the range and quality of the glass. All of these things are helping to inform our current work to preserve and enhance the visitor's understanding and appreciation of this unique site to the benefit of the city.'
- Chairman of RCAHMS: 'The Basil Spence archive has been deposited with the Commission, and the Heritage-Lottery funded project to catalogue and conserve it carried with it an obligation to engage in public outreach. High-quality contextual research was also required to provide the analysis to be communicated to the public through exhibitions, workshops, seminars, and conferences. Louise Campbell and her associates played a very important role in all this.'

The following have provided statements to corroborate the claims made in the case study:

- Blue Plaques Historian, English Heritage
- Senior Architectural Investigator, English Heritage
- Manager, Dictionary of Scottish Architects
- Deputy Head of Listing and Designed Landscapes, Historic Scotland