

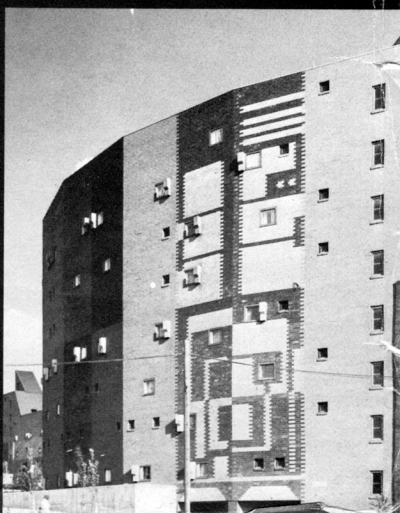
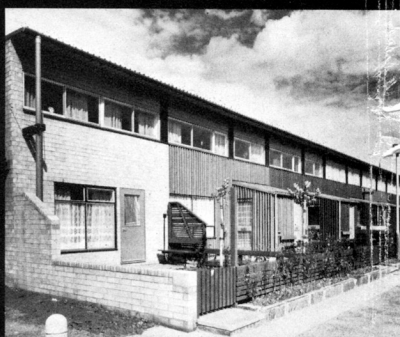
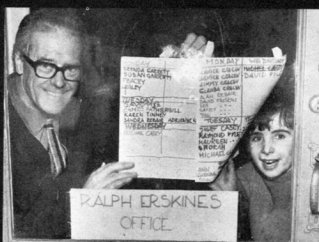


A reappraisal of Byker Part 1: Magic, myth and the architect

For a generation of architects disillusioned with the environmental rampages of the '60s, Byker and Ralph Erskine have become symbols of a radical change of heart. The retention and participation of the community have priority now. However, a future generation will look back with equal disillusionment unless the

legend is amended by an analysis of the facts. In the first of two articles on Byker, Peter Malpass describes the limitations of what has been achieved and the serious problems which still face all those architects who genuinely wish to see people having more effective power to decide the fate of their own homes.

'There are two key questions. . . . Have the people been able to remain in their home neighbourhood? Have the people of Byker been closely involved in the formulation of policies and their subsequent execution? If we probe into the Byker myth we find the answers must be no.'



The illustrations on the following pages were chosen by us from a very large selection of photographs taken in Byker, before and during redevelopment, by Sirkka-Liisa Konttinen, whose written statement is set out below. The photographs are a statement in themselves.

By implication we could be charged with overromanticising about the 'good old days'; in fact the message is simpler. The photographs are of people who, unlike planners and architects, do not believe that change must necessitate a total demolition and rebuilding of their homes.

It is not trite to say over and over again that these are photographs of people, not buildings. The violence done to some people's environments in the name of someone else's definition of progress can never be justified to them and until that fact is sensed by every member of the profession, we will continue to be held in low esteem by those people on whose behalf we mistakenly think we are acting.

PH

Sirkka-Liisa Konttinen writes: 'Standing on top of Byker Hill, John Wesley exclaimed of the breathtaking panorama beneath his feet: "A vision of paradise!" Presumably, in 1790, it actually excluded Byker, since Byker then was just a village, mostly behind his back. His vision of Paradise was the city of Newcastle down in the valley. For me, in 1970, the vision began from the hill, sweeping down along the steep cobbled streets with rows of one-ups-one-downs, into the town and beyond. The streets of Byker were breathtaking in more than one sense.

'I came to live in Byker at the start of the redevelopment and stayed till I was bulldozed out of my street in 1976. During those years I photographed the "old" Byker on its way out and apprehensively watched the "new" Byker start to emerge out of its ashes. The old way of life held a very special attraction for me. The community was still going strong in its rundown setting—my street was made up of a handful of families, with grandparents, uncles, cousins and newly-wed daughters living doors from each other. The daughter, mother and grandmother would meet in the pub at the bottom of the street for a chat and a song, the father and son raced pigeons down on the railway embankment. The second-hand shops flourished in Raby Street, there was still room for initiative and imagination. The old people, the children and the loners like "Dumny" and "Darkie" were important and functioning members of the community, all part of an intricate pattern of mutual need and care, much based on unquestioned "old-fashioned" humanistic values.

'Whether their way of life would have continued much longer if left undisturbed is hard to say, but there are ways of dying and one could argue that a natural death is always preferable to a violent one.'

The other side of the Wall

by Peter Malpass*

'Feedback from Byker is no longer simply the concern of Newcastle. The ideas generated here will be turning up in all kinds of places around the world'

(Diana Rowntree, *Architectural Design*, June 1975).

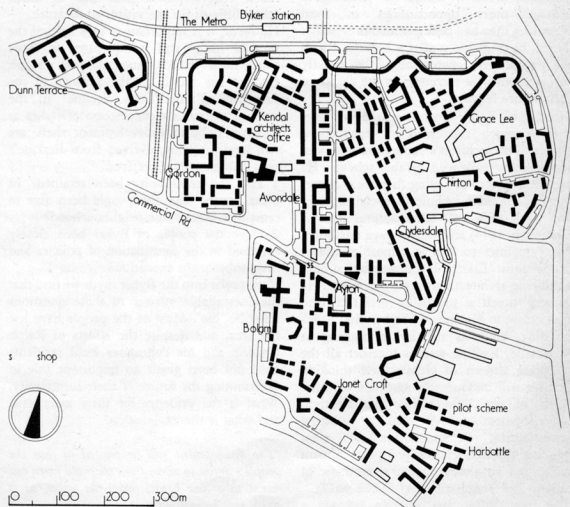
There was nothing special about Byker 20 years ago. It was just one of several nineteenth century working class neighbourhoods in Newcastle which were sliding into apparently irreversible physical decline after years of neglect by private landlords and prevarication by the city council. Over 17 000 people lived there, in tightly-packed little Tyneside flats which were often overcrowded and lacking in basic modern amenities. Some parts were in such poor condition that they were already condemned, others were brought into the slum clearance programme in 1960 and by 1963 the whole of Byker was scheduled for redevelopment, enveloped in the Wilfred Burns plan to demolish a quarter of the city's entire housing stock in less than 20 years.

What makes Byker special is that in 1968 the city council decided to respond to local demands and to acknowledge that here was a cohesive community which should be sensitively conserved, rather than sacrificed in a dash to create a kind of Venice of the north. The local people proclaimed a preference for new houses within Byker and for the preservation of their community

spirit. The council decided to use Byker to represent a break with the familiar 'numbers game' in public housing and to emphasise instead redevelopment based on the existing community. The appointment of Ralph Erskine as architectural and planning consultant symbolised the break with past attitudes and demonstrated a commitment to the new policy. Erskine appealed to the leaders of the council because, among other things, he presented an approach which centred on Byker and its residents.

Erskine's general architectural philosophy and his particular priorities in Byker were set out in a statement of aims for council leaders in November 1968. 'At the lowest possible cost for the residents, and in intimate contact and collaboration with them particularly, and with relevant authorities generally, to prepare a project for planning and building a complete and integrated environment for living in its widest possible sense. This would involve us in endeavouring to create positive conditions for dwelling, shopping, recreation, studying and—as far as possible—working in near contact with the home. It would involve us in considering the wishes of the people of all ages and many tastes. We would endeavour to maintain, as far as possible, valued traditions and characteristics of the neighbourhood itself and its relationship with the surrounding areas and the centre of Newcastle. The main concern will be for those who are already resident in Byker, and the need to rehouse them without breaking family ties and other valued associations or patterns of life.'

This manifesto therefore contained the two main elements of community-based redevelopment: local rehousing and the



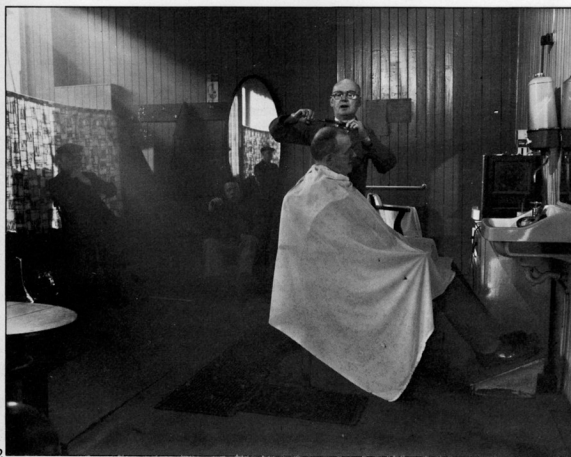
1 Site and location plan.

*Peter Malpass is a lecturer in social policy at Bristol Polytechnic. This article is based on research commissioned by the Department of the Environment and carried out while the author was at the Architecture Research Unit, University of Edinburgh. The views expressed here are not necessarily shared by the DOE.

2 Mr Douglas giving a haircut in his barber shop in Raby Street (1974). He has retired and the shop has closed down.

3 The Shipley Street wash house (1971). One of the focal points for women of the old community.

4 (facing page) Demolition and vandalism in the neighbourhood . . . anxiety . . . isolation. . . This old man was one of the last people left in his street (1971).



The first element of the Byker myth to be refuted concerns local rehousing. If you go there and talk to people in the Wall or other new houses you will quickly get the impression that neighbours, relatives and friends have been rehoused close together. You are unlikely to find anyone who was not living in Byker before they moved to their new place. But what about the others, those who used to live in Byker but are now scattered all around Newcastle? There are many more of these people but of course they are invisible to all except the determined researcher. As a proportion of people living in the redevelopment area in



involvement of existing residents in the formulation of goals. Implicit in this concept is letting the needs and preferences of the community determine the priorities in the scheme. Such an approach was an innovation in 1969, certainly in Newcastle, but the council backed Erskine and he came up with several ideas on how to go about the task. First, he opened an office in the midst of the redevelopment area, in shop front premises in full view of passers-by. Second, he showed how by reducing the size of individual clearance areas it would be possible to provide more opportunities of local rehousing than had been planned previously. Third, he proposed a pilot scheme in which the prospective tenants would be directly involved with the architects in the design of their future houses.

Since 1969 Ralph Erskine and Byker have become much celebrated in architectural circles. The architect's reputation has been considerably enhanced by this scheme. He has been quoted as saying that the architect must be a builder, technician, social engineer and a bit of a poet (*Architectural Review*, December 1974) and others have attributed these qualities to him in almost messianic proportions: 'Erskine is unusual in that he is a thinking architect, but not a polemicist. He is very much a practising architect who sticks close to his drawing board. And in his building, such as the Byker housing at Newcastle, Erskine weaves together all the disparate strands of architectural thinking that we will undoubtedly associate with the spirit of the '70s: public participation, redevelopment which retains existing communities, personalisation of mass housing through cluster grouping, human scale, and an almost medieval aesthetic of jumble and irregularity' (AJ 3.3.76 p417). The new Byker has quickly become a magnet for students, practitioners and

policy-makers, who flock to the banks of the Tyne to see for themselves some of the best public sector housing of recent years. Byker is the symbol of successful redevelopment and quality design in mass public housing. Accordingly, it has received widespread coverage in the specialist and popular press, on television and radio. All this has helped to foster the belief, now widely held, that Byker is not just a well designed scheme (which the visitor can judge for himself) but that it is also a successful example of community-based redevelopment—and this is much more difficult for the visitor to measure. However, it is important to look behind the popular image and not to jump to facile conclusions which suggest that Ralph Erskine has found all the answers to the problems of inner city decline. In the attempt to evaluate the success of Byker as community-based redevelopment there are two key questions, derived from Erskine's own statement of objectives.

1 Has the community been retained? In other words, have the people been able to remain in their home neighbourhood?

2 Have the people of Byker been closely involved in the formulation of policies and their subsequent execution?

If we probe into the Byker myth we find that the inescapable answer to these questions must be 'No'. Most of the people have left the area, and despite the efforts of Ralph Erskine and his colleagues local residents have not been given an important role in determining the future of their community. What is the evidence for these assertions, and what is the explanation?

'The development will be phased so that the people's desire to move from their old worn out house to a new house, down the street, as it were, will be realised' (Ralph Erskine, *Northern Echo*, 6.2.70).

1960 those who now live in the new houses are a small group.

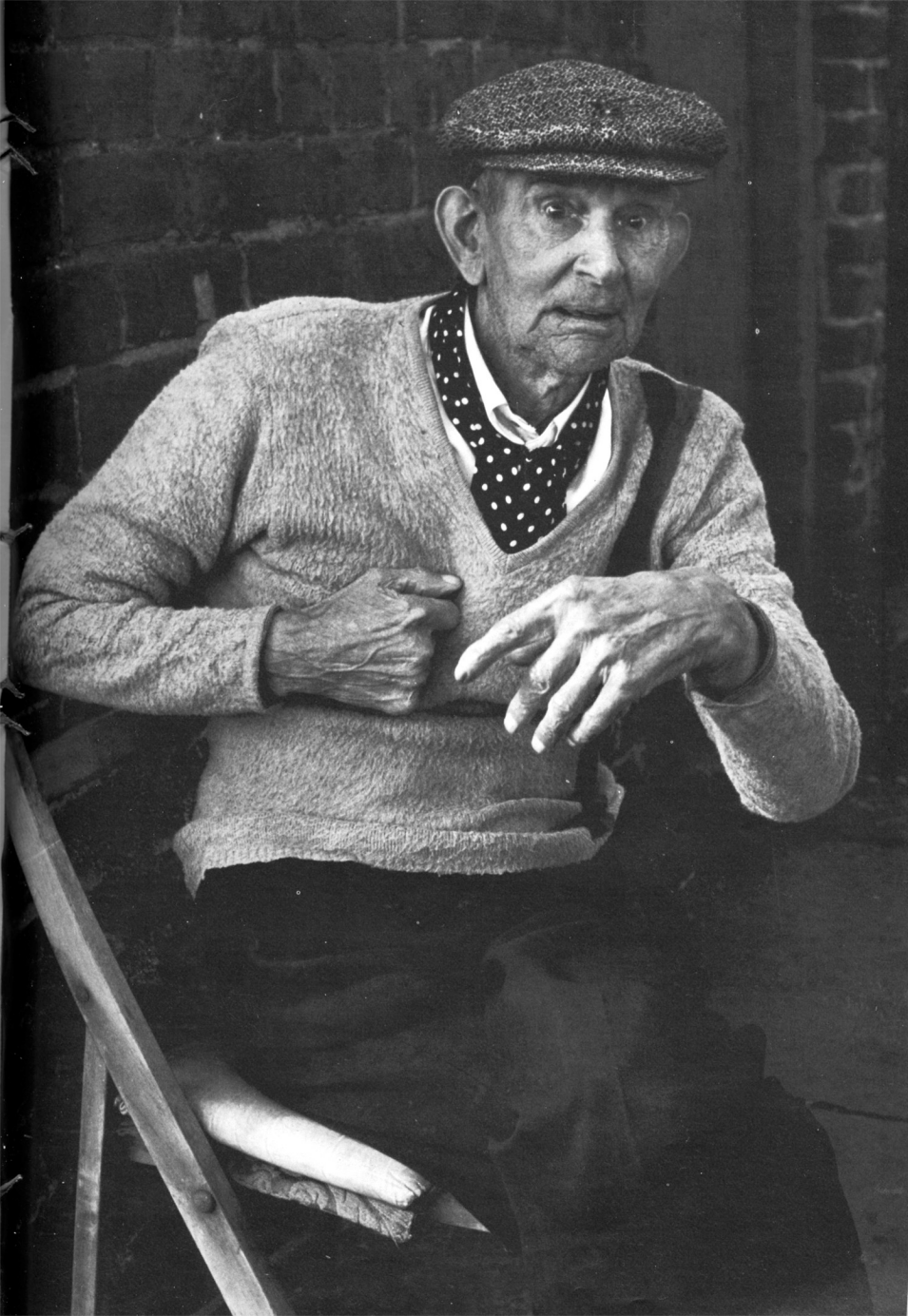
Byker population estimates

1960	17 450	1975	6200
1968	12 000	1979	4400

Since the start of demolition the population has declined by 75 per cent and since the decision to retain the community it has fallen by 64 per cent. Erskine proposed to accommodate over 9000 people in the new scheme and the intention was that most of the people remaining in Byker at the time his plan was accepted (February 1970) would be given the chance to remain. However, in practice things have not worked out that way for several reasons. By January 1979 the population was only 4400 and there were still 1000 dwellings to be built but only about 50 old houses to be demolished. This means that 40 per cent of the dwellings will be built after the removal of the people who had originally expected to move into them. As a result of this and because of decisions in 1974 and 1975 to allocate a small number of dwellings to households from beyond the redevelopment area, it looks very much as if only marginally more than 50 per cent of the new units will go to Byker people and that at least 5000 households will have left the area altogether. One is left to speculate about what would have happened had the policy not been to retain the community.

Technical problems

Having shown that the community has not been retained, the next problem is to explain why. There are serious technical difficulties in any scheme to build 2400 dwellings, but when the aim is to put those dwellings on a cleared site and to dovetail clearance and



rebuilding so that the population is retained the problems are multiplied considerably. In addition to the mass of everyday problems and minor office crises, there are three sorts of technical difficulties which have plagued the Byker scheme.

1 Problems produced by external systems, beyond the control of the architect or his client, such as the state of the national economy, the rate of inflation in the building industry and central Government attempts to use the housing programme as an economic regulator. Byker, for instance, was affected by the widespread reluctance of builders to tender for local authority contracts during 1973. This caused a serious delay in starting to build on two sites and at the same time delays were accumulating on stages I and II of the Wall. Stage I was eventually a spectacular 90 weeks late, on what had been

originally a 73 week contract.

2 Constraints which arise from the nature of the exercise itself. Old houses have to be cleared in order to build new ones. So it was inevitable that some people would have to leave in order to free sites for new building and that some houses would be built after the departure of the last families in the old houses. The question of the *size* of these groups was, however, a less technically-determined issue.

3 Factors arising from the previous events and decisions; the policy of retaining the community came after 15 years of accumulated planning decisions and considerable active intervention. It was impossible, therefore, to escape entirely from the impact of the past.

Nevertheless, despite the important part that these problems have played, particularly by

creating stressful environmental conditions which have encouraged people to leave rather than wait for local rehousing, they are not the source of the most valuable lessons to be learned from Byker. Just as valuable in explaining why the community has not been retained is the failure to involve the residents in decisions and the weakness of the architect's position in relation to the local authority.

'Our office in the middle of Byker would form the base for a team, consisting of a sociologist/social anthropologist, working with local contracts, and a community development officer with a supporting team ...'

(Byker redevelopment, Erskine's plan of intent, 1970).

The architects' office on Brinkburn Street opened in September 1969, to the





accompaniment of much praise in the local press, which described the office as the '... strategic hq for the international team of architects, commissioned at a cost of £300 000 to give the district a radical face-lift by the mid 1970s, *Evening Chronicle* 15.9.69). The task at that stage was to make a wide range of contacts in the community and to discover the mood of the people. The architects were not working class Geordies (to put it mildly) and they needed to get to grips with the community, its structure, conventions, requirements etc. In this sense the office represented an unusually thorough attempt by architects to immerse themselves in the culture of a particular set of clients. On the other hand it was also an attempt to take architecture to the clients, who were encouraged to visit the office and to discuss (often at great length) the plans which were



8 'Jolly girls' providing the evening's entertainment in Heath Hotel in Shields Road (1973).



9 Two families sunbathing in Mason Street backlane.



10 George McCartney and Sydney Aubrey in Bolam Street (1975). George, born in 1900, was a music hall entertainer and still performs to old age pensioners, playing his one string fiddle and accordion and doing face contortions.



the design stages. The pilot scheme was a one-off exercise and probably quite rightly, for close and intimate contact with every prospective user is not necessary. Instead of participation in design the architects broadened their view of the right way to conduct relations with their primary clients. There was a brief and unsuccessful attempt to promote organised discussion of design and planning proposals but this came to nothing, largely because the residents' overriding concern was with when they would be rehoused. Subsequently emphasis was placed on two areas: gathering feedback from tenants in the new houses and campaigning for forward allocation, ie informing tenants in advance of completion which dwelling they are to be offered. This was eventually agreed by the reluctant Housing Department and became standard practice, although in some cases the amount of notice people have been given has been shorter than the three to six months that was agreed. The benefit of forward allocation is that it takes some of the worry and uncertainty out of waiting, which is particularly valuable for people living with active clearance. Without the architects' pressure this innovation would not have come about.

'What is happening in Byker is largely an example of intractable social and technical problems being handled by a local authority and other professionals with a lot of sensitivity and concern. At various stages people have been consulted about changes and at others the expressed wishes of the local people have been allowed to modify policy and practice. All this is admirable and in many ways successful, but it is not participation.'

(Byker community development officer, 1975.)

In looking at relations between the authorities and the Byker public we find that throughout the redevelopment councillors and officers have been on the defensive, trying to resist further moves towards real participation. They have wanted to keep the residents at arm's length and to distribute information leaflets or attend public meetings rather than devise ways of developing the power of the residents to determine the future of their own area.

It is important to be clear about what has actually happened in Byker. Erskine, and in particular his Byker-based colleagues, have led the field in promoting ways of involving the public and in spite of the corporation's conservative approach they have achieved some definite progress. The local office, the pilot scheme, forward allocation and the architects' support for institutions such as the liaison committee (a regular forum for exchange of views between residents and the authority) all represent attempts to make this major redevelopment scheme less brutalising and more responsive to local needs. Nevertheless it is necessary to establish that despite their value such innovations are inadequate to guarantee retention of the community and their true value may be negated if they are taken by others as the

being formulated. Considerable numbers of the residents did take the opportunity to visit the office. Particularly in the early days they used to bring in all sorts of problems, not necessarily within the remit of the designers, partly because there was no other 'official' agency present in the locality. One group of residents in particular was encouraged to attend the office; these were the 46 households selected for the pilot scheme. 'These new houses are a magnificent example of the co-operation between the people who need them and the people who built them. This is the beginning of a new Byker' (alderman A. Grey, leader of the council, *City News*, September 1971).

It was necessary to make an early start on rebuilding for public relations reasons and, apart from the site of the perimeter block, there was only one small parcel of land immediately available. It made sense to make a start here, but the small scale of this initial project made it desirable to utilise it as both a testbed for tenant participation in design and for the sorts of dwelling types which were planned for the rest of the scheme.

What was built was clearly not the result of architect and client sitting down together with a blank sheet of paper. The dwellings were obviously in the Erskine style and despite the way the local papers presented the story (and thereby helped to fuel the growing myth) it was never intended that tenants would be able to design their own houses. The objective was not to attempt to give each family exactly what they wanted,

partly because that would be impossible within the cost constraints and partly because the houses were conceived as prototypes for the dwellings to be built later. The prospective tenants were intended to constitute a representative group of locals whose comments would be fed into the design process, and who would also be given certain limited choices within the dwelling. Meetings with tenants were held throughout the design stage and while the houses were being built they eagerly monitored progress and generally kept an eye on the builders. When the houses were finished, in mid-1971, at first the tenants were euphoric. But soon problems began to emerge and there followed a lengthy dialogue, even wrangle, between them, the architects and the Housing Department. Less than a year after they moved in the residents formed a Tenants Association through which to pursue their grievances with the corporation and at least for a time some success was achieved, despite attempts to write off the complaints as petty.

The tenants in the pilot scheme had been singled out for special consultation and their frustration was partly due to their high expectations arising from that consultation and the fact that until their houses were built there was no clear guide as to what they were going to get. The people who followed them in subsequent phases could at least see what had already been built and so they had some idea what to expect. However, subsequent phases did not have anything like the same level of involvement with the architects in



model of how to achieve community-based renewal. Perhaps the most important lesson to be learned from Byker is that even though progress has been made, the real power to decide what should be done, and when, lay outside the community, in the Civic Centre. None of the plans for greater public participation was able to challenge the existing distribution of power successfully.

The decision to open the architects' office in Byker was a genuine attempt to take architecture to the people, but in retrospect it is clear that in one sense it represented a source of confusion. I do not think that Ralph Erskine or his staff were ever seriously misled, because they have always had a clear view of the limitations of what they were doing, but in the elaboration of the Byker myth the impression has been created that the local office did represent the elevation of users to the status of primary clients. In fact, the Byker experience illustrates the distribution of power between the authorities, a consultant architect and building users: the power to decide major issues remained with the corporation and Erskine's position was, in the final analysis, too weak to wrest control from the Civic Centre and to deliver it to the community. So although he aspired to treat the residents as the primary clients, in fact the local authority called the tune. For instance, it was clear from the beginning that the decisions to build the Shields Road motorway and to reduce the residential density were not subject to consultation, although of course they had a significant impact on how far the

community could be retained. Less obvious to the public eye was the subsequent refusal of corporation officials to modify their plans in ways which would improve people's chances of local rehousing. The decision about whether you go for a smooth rolling programme of phased redevelopment (which suits professional and commercial interests) or whether you maximise opportunities of local rehousing is in fact as much a political (ie concerning values) as a technical matter. What happened in Byker was that Erskine produced the phasing programme and got caught up in the public relations exercise, emphasising the lack of displacement which would be required; but behind the scenes the officials went ahead with plans to build only 500 dwellings in the period 1971-73, when they also intended to demolish no less than 2350.

The pilot scheme also illustrated the problems faced by the user-oriented architect employed by a corporate client. The constraining framework of the institutionalised, rule-bound system for producing council houses meant that the architects and tenants were not free to make the important decisions together. Nationally imposed cost ceilings and minimum standards, as well as local official requirements (represented by the Housing Department presence at the design consultation meetings) imposed an external check on the architect-client relationship. In addition the pilot scheme showed quite clearly that participation in design was not an important issue for local people when

compared with whether and when they were going to be rehoused in Byker.

To conclude this first part, then, the main lessons which emerge from the experiment in community-based redevelopment are that we should be aware of the limitations of what has been achieved and the serious problems that have to be overcome. Specifically, the idea of an on-site architects' office should not mislead us into thinking that priority really was given to the residents as clients. The value of the office is in drawing attention to the contradiction of aiming to work for one set of clients while the key resources are controlled by another. From the attempt to involve tenants in design we should learn that what was more important was the overall distribution of decision-making power. The real question remains who gets what, when and how, and who decides?

Next week Peter Malpass concludes his investigation of the myth by questioning the motivation of those who proposed participation at Byker.

PHOTOGRAPHS ON P962 BY BILL TOOMEY, G. CLARKE AND MANCHESTER DAILY MAIL. ALL OTHER PHOTOGRAPHS BY SIRKKA-KIISA KONTTINEN.



A reappraisal of Byker

Part 2: Magic, myth and the architect

'Participation has become merely an aspect of urban management rather than a means of giving people a decisive voice in their area'. The physical redevelopment of Byker continues as does the struggle of that community, and many others, for a decisive voice in the fate of their homes.

The Byker model of participation leaves architect and community trapped, deceived and confounded by a cloud of good intentions. Consensus is the enemy of participation. Peter Malpass concludes his reappraisal of Byker, the first part of which appeared in last week's AJ.

The politics of participation

by Peter Malpass

The first part of this reappraisal of community-based redevelopment at Byker showed that despite the many valuable innovations and the substantial myth which has grown up around them, the community has not been retained. The conclusion was that the limitations rather than the achievements provide the most important lesson and public participation in decision-making was identified as the crucial issue. Here it is explained how the city council kept control over the vital decisions by taking a restricted view of participation and by promoting the notion of consensus.

'We understand participation to be the act of sharing in the formulation of policies and proposals. Clearly the giving of information by the local planning authority and of an opportunity to comment on that information is a major part of the process of participation, but it is not the whole story. Participation involves doing as well as talking and there will be full participation only where the public are able to take an active part throughout the plan-making process. There are limitations to this concept. One is that responsibility for preparing the plan is, and must remain, that of the local planning authority' (the Skeffington report, *People and planning*). The Skeffington report on public participation in planning was published in July 1969, just at the time when Ralph Erskine was preparing his report for the city council on how to tackle the Byker scheme. Skeffington's very restricted view of participation provided a convenient model for the local authority in its relations with Byker. The good intentions of the local

authority and Ralph Erskine as regards retaining the community were in the end thwarted by this decision to pursue participation in a form which denied local people a chance to promote their goals. It is important to draw from Byker the lesson that good intentions are inadequate as a guarantee of achieving any particular objective. What we have to comprehend is the political nature of the redevelopment process and the fact that the local authority operated with an hierarchy of policies which gave retention to the community less importance than moving ahead quickly with rebuilding.

Only in a situation where participation was defined as giving a significant level of freedom to the local community to make decisions and control policy would it be possible for the goals set out in the Erskine plan to be achieved. Thus participation was not just a fashionable bandwagon to latch onto; it was in this case a necessary condition for the retention of the community.

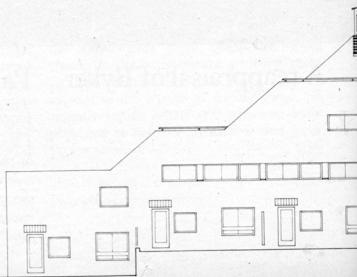
The purpose of participation in Byker has been two-fold, in the Skeffington mould; that is, it has been about keeping the people informed about progress with the redevelopment (particularly the official view of progress) and about improving the officials' level of understanding of local needs and preferences in order to improve the basis of decision-making. This sort of thing is fine where there is a clear consensus but urban redevelopment is not like that. In order to understand properly what was going on in Byker we have to look at redevelopment as a political process. We are here concerned with a situation in which elected representatives and their various professional advisers seek to decide whether and how to deal with certain sorts of urban problems, specifically worn-out housing and traffic congestion. It is necessary to look at what happened in Byker in terms of competition for power, authority and

influence among a number of interest groups, each seeking to establish its view of the problem and to impose its preferred solution. The policy of retaining the community should itself be seen as the outcome of a prolonged debate, both within the Civic Centre and beyond, as to the best way of dealing with Byker. The extent to which that policy has or has not been fulfilled is the result of subsequent battles between its defenders and those with rather different interests to pursue.

Had the city council only had Byker to deal with the problems of retaining the community and of public participation would have been much simpler. But of course the authority was faced with a number of competing and conflicting claims for resources, which is why a strong voice from Byker was necessary but also why the council did not encourage it. The corporation, as has already been explained, was committed to redevelopment in Byker and to certain elements (such as the Shields Road motorway) long before retaining the community was accepted as policy. These prior commitments, supported by well-established lobbies, ensured that retaining the community remained a low priority.

The local authority preferred the restricted, Skeffington type of participation because its interest lay in not giving up power and thereby weakening its ability to carry out its responsibilities as it saw them. Its interest lay in carrying the public along with official policy rather than in sharing power. When the council committed itself to participation in Byker it seized the initiative—instead of having to face an organised body of residents operating through political channels to achieve control over policy in the neighbourhood, the council built participation on its own terms into its approach. Through its control of contact with the public the council has been able to

1 Despite efforts by those working in Erskine's Byker office to make people look at the merits of the whole of the Byker redevelopment, probably the most memorable and persuasive argument used to acclaim the success of Byker is the Wall. On plan the concept seems mad, megalomaniac, but the end result confounds all these concerns. The final part of the Wall wraps around Dunn Terrace, beginning as a two-storey five-person home (on this page) and rising to a final height of 12 storeys at the other end (p1018). Some critics have waxed lyrical over the humanising of the Wall, the balconies on one face and chequered brick on the other. Well-intentioned humanity is reflected in the design thinking of the buildings and all the other efforts by Erskine's colleagues to retain and involve the community. However the political realities of participation in local government decision making demands more than simply good intentions, and humanity.



3 The magnificent view into Newcastle which has always been such a strong part of Byker's visual history. The 12-storey sheltered housing project, Tom Collins House, rises out of the development 'as a recognition point both within

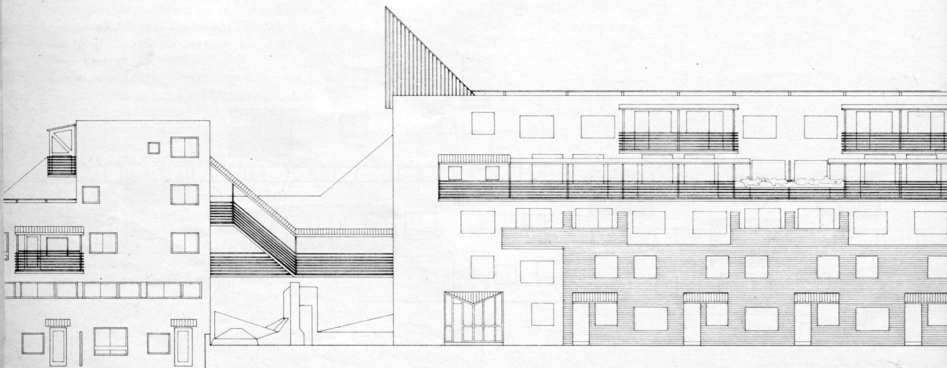
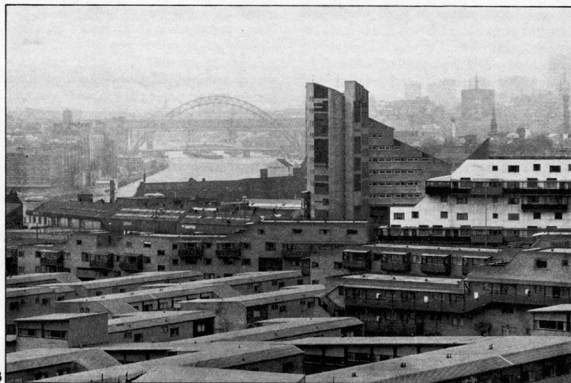
Byker and in the relationship of Byker to the centre of the city'.

4 In rising from three storeys to 12 the angle created ensures that the building does not dominate the rest of the development at this point.

clients they must be alive to the politics of policy-making and implementation in local government. They must try to ensure that the people they want to treat as their clients are in a position to make the important decisions and they will only achieve that position by careful, painstaking effort within the political arena. For, as Norman Dennis has so aptly put it, '... in the absence of effective pluralistic participation free from the authorities' control, the members of the rank and file ... may and too often do find themselves with parts in the hallucinations of people who have the power to make them play out the roles allocated to them, as painful as they are fantastic.' ('In dispraise of political trust' in *Public participation in planning*, W. Sewell and J. Coppock (eds), Wiley, London 1977).

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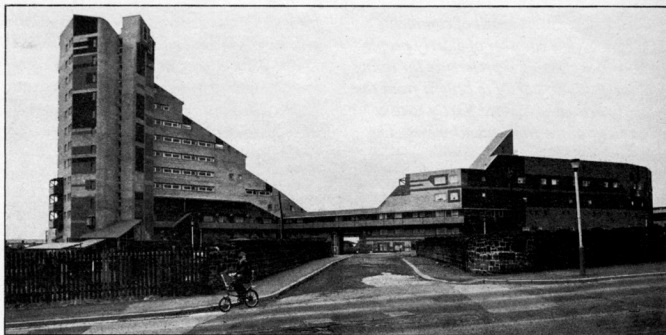


5 What is sheltered housing, what is family housing? The edges are blurred, but only physically, in architectural terms.

Tom Collins House

at Dunn Terrace, Byker, Newcastle upon Tyne

for City of Newcastle upon Tyne
by Ralph Erskine's Arkitektkontor in
association with Douglas Wise & Partners
architect in charge Vernon Gracie
architectural team Per Hederus, Arne
Nilsson, Gerry Kemp, Annsofi Högberg and
in Douglas Wise Alan Moody, Jim Sharp,
Chris Ward
quantity surveyors Gardiner & Theobald
services/electrical and mechanical engineer
NIFES (National Industrial Fuel Efficiency
Services)
structural engineer White, Young & Partners
main contractor Shepherds Construction Ltd



Architect's account

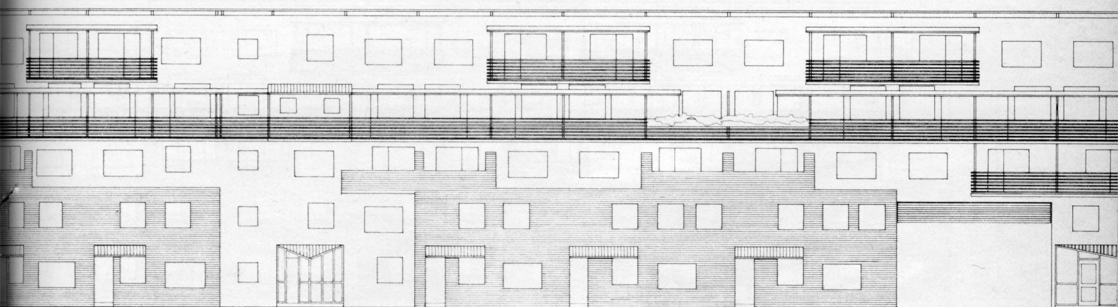
by Vernon Gracie

The Dunn Terrace scheme is to a fairly high density—289 persons per hectare—at the north-western end of the Byker area, where it would have been affected by the noise from the proposed motorway which is now being replaced by the construction of a section of the Metro. A perimeter block five floors high acts as a noise barrier, in line with the previous phases of the redevelopment where the same condition applies, to keep the noise in the external environment of the scheme to acceptable levels. The site slopes to the south-west giving views over the Tyne to the centres of Newcastle and Gateshead and the configuration of the two groups of houses and the 'Link' blocks gives the benefit of sun and view to as many dwellings as possible.

The sheltered housing scheme, Tom Collins House, took the form of a high-rise



6 Site plan of Dunn Terrace.



building partly as a result of comments made by quite a number of elderly people in Byker expressing a preference for living 'off the ground'; partly to benefit from the security this can give and partly to take advantage of the tremendous views. The

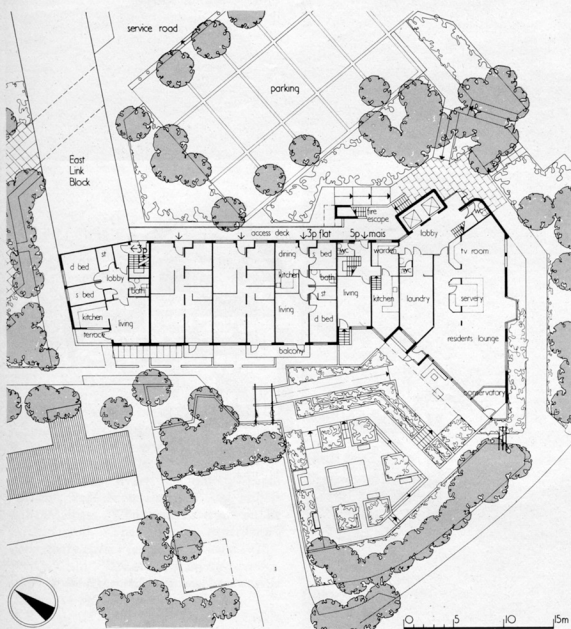
form itself was generated by the desire to give physical contact with the rest of the Dunn Terrace scheme without overshadowing or overdominating it. It was also hoped that linking the scheme through to the perimeter block, with easy

access both at ground level and access deck level, would help to provide the possibility of social contact. The 'blurring of the edges' between the sheltered housing and the rest of the scheme was taken a step further when three-person flats were introduced on the lowest three floors. These can be used by disabled tenants either as an extension of the sheltered housing scheme or as normal flats. In this way we tried to accommodate another preference which elderly people had discussed with us. They wanted to be rehoused together in groups, close to family housing, facilities and so on but slightly protected from the disturbance that would result if their flats were mixed into family housing. A degree of separation was wanted but with the possibility of ready social contact.

Visual Contact

We felt that it would be helpful if tenants could recognise 'their' floor on stepping out of the lift and varying the length of the access corridor, position of bin stores, hobby rooms, colour and planting could all help to give an identity to each level. The lower floors have access decks of similar character to those on link blocks and perimeter blocks. The higher floors take a closed, protective form with carpeted corridors.

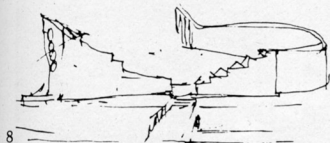
The community rooms on the ground floor face onto a rose garden. A small conservatory will, we hope, be taken over and run by some of the tenants, though this has not really happened as yet. The community rooms are raised so that people can look over the rose garden, down the main pedestrian route through Dunn



7 Ground floor and landscaping plan of Tom Collins House.



Terrace to the corner shop and this visual contact is also possible from the individual balconies to each flat. The most popular place in the community room is the bay window by the kitchen, which is almost always occupied. The Residents'



Association has used the community room for meetings from time to time and has expressed a real wish to involve the tenants in the affairs of the community. We tried to ensure that the building would be a good neighbour to other areas of Byker by not obstructing views or overshadowing. It also, by its height, would function as a recognition point both within Byker and in the relationship of Byker to the centre of the city.

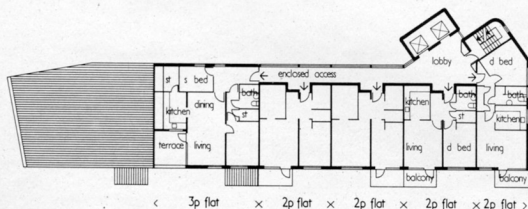
Materials

The construction is of in situ concrete crosswalls and slabs. Metric modular brickwork outer leafs on the north side and gable are patterned on the lift shafts and part of the end gable, thus taking up and completing the theme of patterning on the northern side of the perimeter block. The south is clad with aluminium sheeting with a white finish. Both this and the character of the balconies are similar to the southern elevation of the perimeter block, though there are considerable differences in detail. The roofs are blue aluminium sheeting with snow fences at

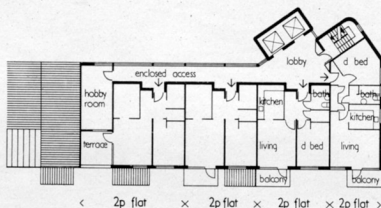
each step.

The building has been in occupation for about a year and feedback from various sources seems to indicate a high level of satisfaction among the tenants. Areas of concern seem confined in the main to the

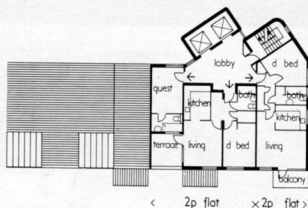
district heating scheme, where there have been some problems with pumps and valve chatter causing noise. Testing of the standby diesel generator, if started up without warning, can be upsetting.



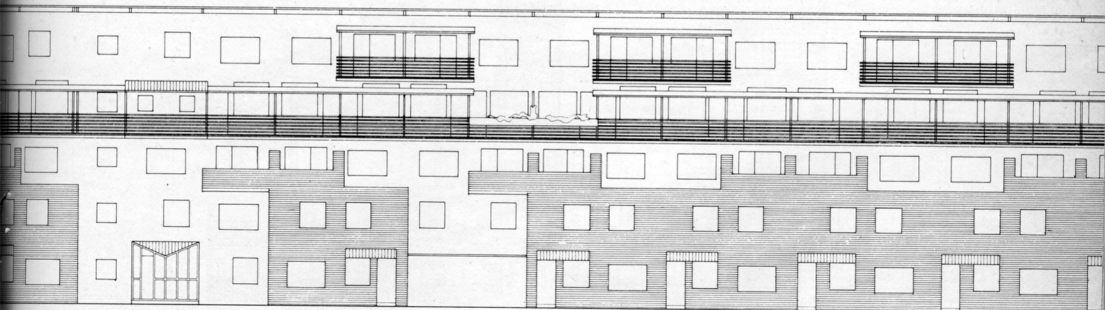
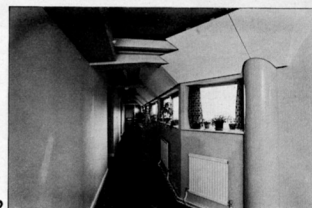
9 Level 5.



10 Level 7.



11 Level 10.



13 The south-western elevation.

14 The north-eastern elevation. The bottom three storeys have open balconies and tie into the link block to the Wall, in contrast to enclosed upper storeys.

15 The conservatory, an additional pleasure for those people sitting in the common room, who also tend to congregate in the bay window (bottom right of the picture).
16 Section.



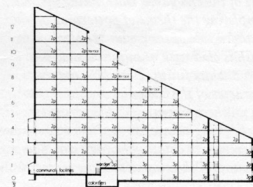
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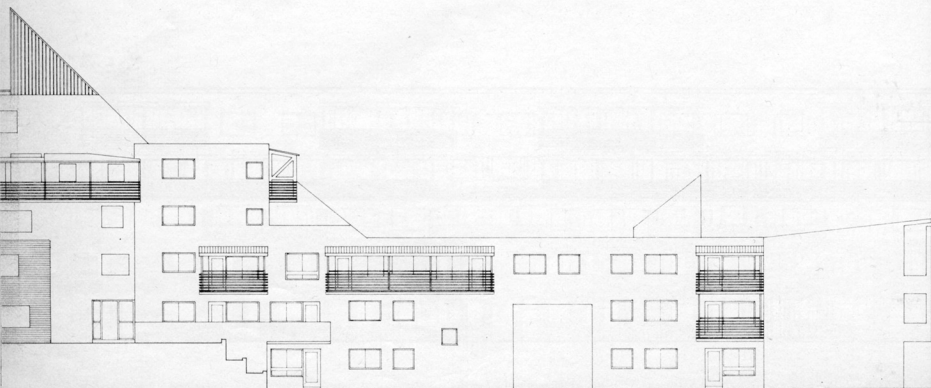
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15



16



17 Tom Collins House is tied in physically to the rest of the Dunn Terrace Wall; access at third floor is also linked.

18 The shadow cast in morning sunlight.

19 The shadow cast in afternoon sunlight. The rest of Dunn Terrace is not overshadowed.

