

# The Victorian Society: Liverpool Group Newsletter

## July 2014

The Society for the study and protection of Victorian and Edwardian architecture and allied arts. HQ 1 Priory Gardens, Bedford Park, London W4 1TT tel 0208 994 1019 website: [www.victorian society.org.uk](http://www.victorian society.org.uk)

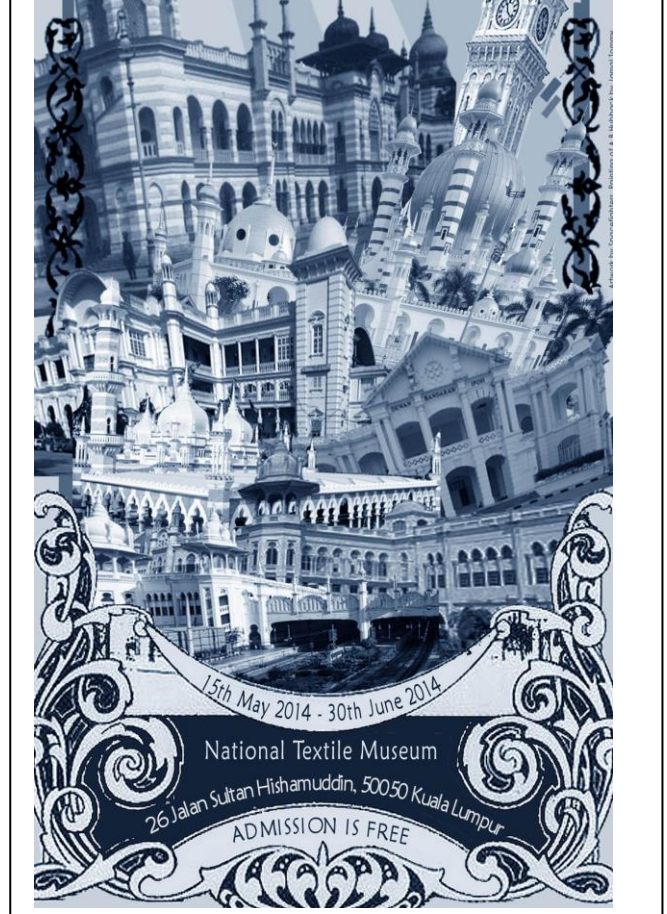
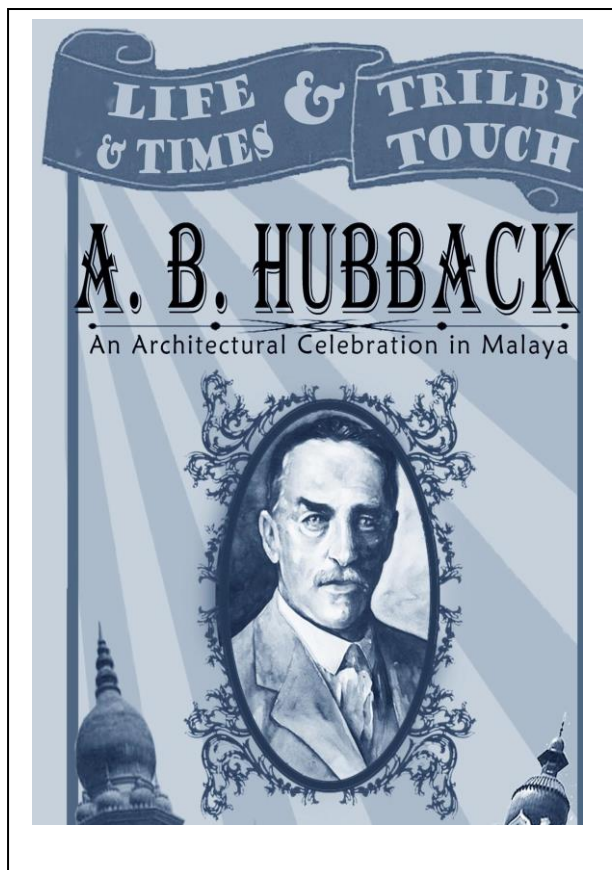
Liverpool group officers: Chairman: Tony Murphy; Vice-Chairman: Guy Snaith; Secretary: Annette Butler; Treasurer: Roger Hull; Activities Bookings Secretary: Diana Goodier, e-mail: [dianagoodier@hotmail.com](mailto:dianagoodier@hotmail.com)

Committee: Christina Clarke, Terry Edgar, Graham Fisher, Andrew Richardson, Mark Sargant, Joseph Sharples, Keith Truman, John Vaughan



Graham Fisher retired as Chairman at the Liverpool group AGM in January 2014. He was replaced by Tony Murphy who thanked Graham for his invaluable contribution to the group not only as Chairman but for leading tours (the latest round Chester this June), giving talks to the group and organising events including the national AGM held in Liverpool in recent years. He was given a cheque and some books in grateful thanks to his boundless energy. Fortunately he has agreed to remain on the Committee!!

Our own Victorian Society campaigner for so many years, Florence Gersten, was recently presented with the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Merseyside Civic Society Award for her heritage saving achievements. Well done Florence.



John Tiernan writes : an exhibition in Malaysia relating to the previously unknown to me Arthur Benison Hubback (1871-1948) – see ODNB and Who was who. Hubback, the son of a former mayor of Liverpool, Joseph Hubback, was appointed as a government architect to the Federated Malay States in Kuala Lumpur, in 1895. During his career in Malaya he designed many prominent public buildings, including a mosque until he left in 1914, becoming a British army officer, eventually rising to the rank of Brigadier General. His distinguished service in WWI earned him the award of CMG and DSO.

The reason that the Architectural Association of Malaysia (Pertubuhan Akitak Malaysia – PAM) contacted me was that Hubback had been trained as an architect by articles to Thomas Shelmerdine and they wondered if I knew anything about this period of his life. I was able to find information on his appointment in 1888 as a “junior assistant”, on 18/- per week – he obviously advanced rapidly as in 1894 he is described as “surveying assistant”, wage 40/- per week – a considerable increase in six years in those days. Obviously his training must have impressed the Malayan Public Works Department as he was appointed Chief Draughtsman and left Liverpool in May 1895. The Liverpool Mercury included the following on 29 May: “Mr Arthur Hubback, son of the late Alderman Hubback, has been appointed Chief Draughtsman in the Public Works Department of Kuala Lumpur, State of Selangor, Straights Settlements. His colleagues of the Architectural staff in the Municipal Buildings, entertained him in the Alexandra Hotel last evening, and offered him every good wish towards success in his new sphere”. The exhibition has now opened in KL, and will be moving round Malaysia in the next few months

## COMMENTARY BY TONY MURPHY

Here we go, with a new team in place, looking forward to another successful half-century for the Liverpool Group. The Golden Jubilee in 2015 is certainly something to celebrate and your thoughts and ideas as to the way to do so will be very welcome.

The major 'news item' recently has to be the tragic fire at the Glasgow School of Art and the destruction of the Library. It is proposed that there be a faithful reconstruction; however, Gavin Stamp, in an interesting and thought-provoking piece in the London Review of Books [19 June 2014], does not seem to be entirely convinced

“how perverse that the sort of modernists who disapprove of replicas of Georgian Interiors, such as the National Trust had done after the Uppark fire, preferring something new, of our own time, should favour the building of an archaeological pastiche, even to the extent of recommending that the new wood is patinated to look old. Such is the reverence now granted to this much misunderstood designer.”

It's worth finding and reading the whole piece, which is a most illuminating review of Mackintosh's practice and fortunes. He touches on the subject of our first talk of the autumn season, which seems now to be sharply relevant: the interior of 78 Derngate, the Northampton home of Wenman Bassett-Lowke the engineer and designer of (highly sophisticated) model trains. This was Mackintosh's final architectural work; after it, he moved to the South of France, devoting himself mainly to painting, especially the remarkable post-Cubist landscapes and seascapes which are almost architectural themselves

The talk should be most informative and, it is hoped, be the prelude to an excursion later in the autumn, to see the house (guided, if we are very fortunate, by Bassett Lowke's niece, who has childhood memories of the house and of the family's life there.) as well as taking in Northampton's Guild Hall, a remarkable work of 1861-64 by Edward Godwin, when he was only 28, the museum, and at least a couple of the famous churches: Pevsner describes G. G. Scott's work at the round church, roughly contemporary with Godwin, as “Scott improving on the Middle Ages, as usual”.

Further details of this later: the plan is for it to be a rail-based trip using London Midland's very good value 'Great Escape' tickets. More at the October meeting.

The major anniversary of 2014 is, of course, the bicentenary of William Butterfield. He is not strongly represented in the North-West and it was unfortunate that the Manchester Group's major event, Alex Bremner's talk in the most important Butterfield building in the region, Holy cross church at Clayton, had to be cancelled because of urgent medical difficulties. So, a chance to learn more and see a building which Hartwell/Hyde say “is not his best work, but was influential locally” (they quote E.W. Pugin at Gorton and J.S. Crowther at Ardwick) will have to wait for another day. Until that comes, Cecil Stewart in 'The Stones of Manchester' (Edward Arnold, 1956) may whet the appetite:

“To enjoy a church like All Saints (Margaret Street), London one must wear smoked glasses. At St Cross, Ashton New Road, the deposited smoke of Manchester saves one the trouble”.

Things have changed on the outside (not least the arrival of a very convenient tram stop) but Stewart does also say

“it is only when one turns away from the altar and faces the west wall that one is confronted by greatness. Here the diapers make as fine an abstract mural as one could wish for.....it is a worthy memorial to Butterfield and it is, therefore, surprising that it is not included in any of the published lists of his works,”

Go and see it. The tram makes it an easy trip; much easier than a journey to Rugby and the master work of Rugby School chapel, though that is to be recommended for anyone unsure about Butterfield. A visit to Clayton can easily be combined with a fresh look at E.W.Pugin's church at Gorton, but for a fuller picture of his style, the 'Gorton effect' has been reproduced, in a sense, at Stanbrook Abbey in Worcestershire, 10 miles or so from Malvern and from Worcester, at the village of Callow End. This was the main Roman Catholic Benedictine nunnery in England, but the buildings and the maintenance costs became too much, so the nuns relocated to Wass in North Yorkshire and their former home has become 'The Stanbrook Experience'. James Lees-Milne, in the Shell Guide to Worcestershire (Faber, 1964), simply said,

“Exceedingly grim penitentiary architecture of 1880, with a multiplicity of narrow, trefoil headed windows”

AmaZingVenues.co.uk promise “the most stunning surroundings” and, so different for the nuns' stories, “breath-taking weddings”. Tea and a tour, a V.I.P.tour,of course, is £25.00 a head. It's unlikely that we will be making a visit but it is well worth visiting the website to see this new Victorian vision.

Stanbrook's buildings are severe, but they are also interesting. Bryan Little in Catholic Churches since 1623 (C. Tinling & Co.,1966) calls them ambitious,

“more ambitious in reality than on paper. For the architect's drawings of 1869 show a tall western bellcote and not the tall tower whose slim corner spirelet rises high above the lush Severn countryside.”

He adds

”its somewhat lavish Geometrical Gothic is better than much else that was built in the very middle of Victoria's reign”

(Even if it is “not from Edward Pugin's best period”)

We saw his work in Rock Ferry on Graham Fisher's walk in 2013 and, if travelling south-west or for an excursion outside the usual, Stanbrook might well make an interesting destination. At least, for the time being, AmaZing Venues have made a large-scale ecclesiastical complex accessible to a wider public, which has to be good news when the future of places closer to home, such as Upholland College, is so uncertain.

Our excursion to Oscott on 17 September is an opportunity to see such an institution still being used for its original purpose. The main buildings, by Joseph Potter of Lichfield, are in a late Tudor style, reminiscent of a Cambridge college, St John's perhaps; however,

A.W.N. Pugin's work, in the gatehouse, "in the more flowing idiom of the fourteenth century", in the oriel window; above all, in the chapel and in the decorative work and altar plate which he provided for the college, is much more spectacular.

This visit, unfortunately, had to be restricted in numbers. If you are on the list, don't forget to book your advance tickets for the 09.04 London Midland train to Birmingham New Street, and for an evening return, perhaps on the 18.36; we'll take the No. 9 bus on its interesting way through Aston and Perry Barr, then up the hill towards Kingstanding and 'Pugin land' and its still spectacular view back to the once distant and smoky city: 'Contrasts' brought to life.

Before then, there are interesting things on offer. Annette Butler's excursion to Eccles on Friday 29 August should certainly be a memorable event; the Victoria Art Gallery and Museum has an interesting and enjoyable exhibition of drypoint prints executed by James Hamilton Hay (born 1874), including some striking images of the Runcorn Transporter Bridge and of his travels to the Suffolk coast and its artistic colonies, and to the Wye valley. He was a real talent and his early death was a sad loss.

There is also a travelling exhibition at the Lady Lever: 'Rossetts's obsession: images of Jane Morris', touring from Bradford Museums and Art Galleries (and their Cartwright Hall is well worth a visit), with 'fascinating examples' offering 'a glimpse into the Pre-Raphaelite master's troubled soul'.

'The storms of Rossetti'; the sunnier world of Hamilton Hay; Eccles in August: a lot to anticipate and enjoy before our autumn programme, with its discovery of Derngate, its march to Rome with Joseph Sharples (with a look at the Gothic revival in the Eternal City: Street is everywhere), and its rediscovery and assessment of Peter Ellis with Graham Jones, whose book is again highly recommended.

And after that, 2015 and the Golden Jubilee year. More about that in the next newsletter, but don't forget, the committee is very much open to your ideas, especially for a suitable celebration of this great landmark. Enjoy the summer; hope to see many of you in the Autumn and, don't forget, the search for new members and supporters never ends.

## EVENTS AND HAPPENINGS

James Hilton Hay: the North West and beyond to 31<sup>st</sup> August at the Victoria Gallery at Liverpool University (Special exhibition gallery 5) an exhibition of dry-point prints by this 19<sup>th</sup> century Merseyside etcher & painter.

The Merseyside Civic Society held a day school at the Bluecoat on June 21<sup>st</sup> on the State of the City 2

**Re-interpretation of the traditional terraced street**

– with Architect, **Ian Killick** of ShedKM

**Re-vitalising inner city neighbourhoods**

– with Health & Environment expert **Erik Bichard** of Salford University

**Relationships between terraced streets and green spaces**

– with **Jonathan Falkingham** of Urban Splash

**The terraced house and healthy living**

– with **Rob MacDonald** and **John Ashton**

This links in nicely with the campaign to save the Welsh Streets by SAVE as from the extract from the Liverpool Echo website:

SAVE - the heritage group who want to protect the **Welsh Streets** - have been accused of triggering the public inquiry by exaggerating evidence.

SAVE oppose the council's plan to demolish 271 homes to be replaced by 154 new houses, with 37 terrace properties refurbished.

Alex Foreshaw, a former planning chief at Islington Council in London, criticised a plan which would change the area and attack the sense of community.

He said: "I've seen children playing in the street, I've seen people sitting in their garden. I don't think it's just some sentimental view of the past."

But Mr Elvin QC, who represents **Liverpool City Council** and **Plus Dane Housing Group**, said SAVE had "campaigned on the basis of a viewpoint but not information".

## Charles Rennie Mackintosh – the Glaswegian Wood?

A visitor to the Long Street Methodist Church in Middleton, five miles north of central Manchester, could be forgiven for thinking they had discovered an undocumented work by Glasgow architect, artist and designer, Charles Rennie Mackintosh. In fact it is by Manchester architect Edgar Wood.



Fig. 1

The Art Nouveau stone tracery of the west window and the wooden front of the gallery in the Sunday school hall (Fig. 1) are reminiscent of Mackintosh's Queen's Cross church in Glasgow and built in the same year, 1899. The rose motif on the font and pulpit and an elegant chair with a tapering high back both bear Mackintosh's trademark style.

Wood's life and work had many similarities with Mackintosh but just as many differences. Close contemporaries, Wood being born eight years before and dying seven years later than Mackintosh, they came from very different backgrounds. Wood was one of only three surviving children of a wealthy businessman and cotton mill owner living in a spacious new house, Sunny Brow, in Middleton and Mackintosh was one of seven surviving children of a policeman living in a tenement in a working class area of Glasgow.

Wood refused to enter his father's business and when his pleas to pursue his vocation as an artist were turned down, a compromise was reached and he was articled to Mills and Murgatroyd, a local firm of architects. They had designed Sunny Brow in 1864 and were known for rebuilding the Manchester Royal Exchange. He hated the tedium of his menial tasks there and, as soon as he qualified in 1885, left to set up his own practice. Using his family connections, a luxury not available to Mackintosh, his first commission, a drinking fountain and shelter, was paid for by his stepmother. He was so successful that he opened a second office, in Oldham, in 1889, then in central Manchester, in 1893. Wood liked to be in control, doing the work himself or with only one assistant, Bertie Schwabe, who described his master as 'a man who always gets his own way'.

Sadly, Mackintosh's efforts to start his own practice were not so successful. Mackintosh had joined the firm of Honeyman and Keppie as a junior draughtsman in 1889, aged 21 but in 1913, Mackintosh had developed severe depression which may or may not have been responsible for his bouts of bad temper, mistakes in drawings and lack of interest in his work. This resulted in Keppie having to ask him to leave their partnership. He set up on his own in 140 Bath Street, in the centre of Glasgow. Receiving no commissions he became ill, moved to Walberswick, a village on the Suffolk coast, and would never return to Glasgow.



Fig 2

A studio photograph of Wood (Fig. 2) shows him as a serious businessman, unlike the ubiquitous photograph of Mackintosh with his artist's exaggerated bow (although they both sported the then fashionable moustache). They were both flamboyant dressers. Wood was known in Manchester for his red-silk-lined cloak, wide brimmed hat and silver topped cane.

It was Mackintosh's cloak and deerstalker that caused him to be arrested as a spy, in Walberswick during WW1, along with his nighttime walks along the beach and mail from his fellow artists in Austria.

Whereas Mackintosh's work is instantly recognisable, Wood changed his style many times during his much longer working life. He designed his own house, Redcroft, Middleton (1892), in his initial style, Arts and Crafts. It included gesso panels of The Muses, which he had designed and executed himself. He also worked in Art Nouveau, for example the house BanneyRoyd, (1901) and Lindley clock tower (1902), both in Huddersfield. His remarkable First Church of Christ, Scientist, with reading room, Victoria Park, Manchester (1907), defies classification.

Both men were proponents of 'gesamtkunstwerk' designing not only the buildings but their furniture, fittings, metalwork and décor. Edgar Wood said he liked to "integrate walls and furniture in one harmonious unit". He was influenced by the Century Guild, which advocated 'the unity of the arts'. The publisher Walter Blackie, for whom Mackintosh designed Hill House said 'every detail, inside as well as outside, received his careful, I might say loving attention....delightfully designed and properly placed'.

Wood was a founder member of the Northern Art Workers' Guild (NAWG), started in 1896 by Walter Crane, the Arts and Crafts artist, designer and active socialist, who was Director of Design at Manchester School of Art. The guild held major exhibitions in 1898 and 1903 where Wood showed furniture, jewellery and metalwork and designed the exhibition catalogue cover. Wood was the guild's first Master and invited Mackintosh to Manchester, to talk to the guild, in January 1902. The guild met at the Manchester City Art Gallery and Mackintosh spoke on 'Seemliness'. This lecture is reproduced in Pamela Robertson's book 'Mackintosh, The Architectural Papers'. There is no record of Wood's having ever visited Glasgow.

In 'Charles Rennie Mackintosh and the Modern Movement' (1952), Howarth described Glasgow School of Art as the first major building of the Modern Movement. Edgar Wood is also cited as a pioneer of the Modern Movement. In 1901, he formed a loose partnership with James Henry Sellers, an innovative local, self-taught, architect whose work on industrial buildings had introduced him to reinforced concrete. Wood is believed to have built the first flat reinforced concrete roof in England, in 1906 on a house in Mellalieu Street, Middleton. He also used flat concrete roofs on Upmeads, Stafford, 1908, described at the time as 'peculiar to the point of oddness' and on Elm Street School, Middleton in 1909.

Mackintosh's interiors for Derngate, a house in Northampton owned by toy manufacturer Bassett-Lowke, 1916, contains Mackintosh's proto Art Deco designs in the lounge/hallway but Wood had used Art Deco chevrons in green and white Pilkington tiles in 1908 on his row of three shops in Manchester Road, Middleton and again in 1914 when he designed his own new home, using his inheritance from his father who had died in 1909. Royd House in Hale Cheshire, had a large, diamond patterned panel over the front door, and on exterior and interior doors. This was possibly inspired by Moorish decoration, which Wood admired.

Both men's styles had eastern influences, Mackintosh's were Japanese, as demonstrated in the construction methods used in the timber framing of some of his buildings, the gallery in Queens Cross church, the famous library in the Glasgow school of art and his own domestic decor. Wood's influences were Persian, Arabic and Tunisian. He sketched cube shaped Arabic houses 20 years before the general acceptance of cubic architectural forms.

Wood's geographical range of work was wider than Mackintosh's and included detached, semi-detached, terraced houses and cottages, churches, small commercial buildings, shops and a clock tower, mainly around Middleton, but also in Staffordshire, Hertfordshire and Huddersfield, where he had family connections. He was also involved, in 1909, in the design of large scale housing estates for people from slum clearance areas. These were not built then but his concept of streets radiating from a central community hub influenced future designs for estates in south Manchester.

Apart from the interiors and external remodelling of one house, Derogate, in Northampton, Mackintosh's work was confined to Glasgow and the surrounding area and his solo works comprised the school of art, two primary schools, one church and a church hall, two newspaper offices, several tea rooms and two large houses but also covered gravestones, interiors, decorative ironwork, house extensions.



Wood and Mackintosh both spent their holidays, whether at home or abroad, drawing, painting and studying architecture. Mackintosh had travelled round Italy in 1891, when he won the Alexander Thomson Memorial Scholarship, producing many fine sketches. Wood also made drawings of churches in Italy which can be seen, along with his other impressionistic pastels and paintings, on the web sites of the Whitworth Art Gallery and the Manchester Art Gallery. His architectural drawings are in the RIBA collection, London. He sent bundles of his pastels back to England to be sold for charity.

Wood held public office, being Master of NAWG in 1897 and President of Manchester Society of Architects in 1911. He was also on the Council of the Manchester Academy of Fine Arts in 1898 and Member of Committee at Manchester School of Art. Although Mackintosh was a FRIBA and a FRIAS, I can find no record of his holding office of any kind.

Both Mackintosh and Wood enjoyed a reputation in Europe, particularly Germany and Austria. In 1898 an article on 'The Four' and Talwin Morris appeared in the German magazine 'DekorativeKunst' followed by the Hill House bedroom and the Willow Tea Rooms in 1905. 'The Four' refers to Mackintosh and his friend Herbert McNair and the two sisters they married, Frances and Margaret Macdonald who collaborated on art in a distinctive Glasgow style.

In 1904 Mackintosh's friend, Hermann Muthesius included seven illustrations by Wood, among them BanneyRoyd, in 'Das EnglischeHaus'. Wood's work was also illustrated in 'Moderne Bauformen' in Germany in 1908.

Edgar Wood's furniture was mainly ecclesiastical and unlike Mackintosh's was heavy, mediaeval and functional. However, a settle with an extremely tall back and two gaunt trees as decoration was exhibited by Wood in 1898. They had both taken part in the London Arts and Crafts exhibition in 1896 where he may have seen a settle exhibited by Mackintosh.

Whereas Mackintosh and his wife Margaret collaborated on their artistic work, Charles saying that Margaret was half, if not three-quarters, of the inspiration for his architectural work, Edgar Wood's wife seems to have played little part in his life or work.

In 1892 he married Annie Maria Jelly, daughter of his former headmaster at Middleton's Queen Elizabeth grammar school, (where his initials can still be seen carved in the woodwork). In 1920 they separated and his inheritance enabled him to retire to Italy to paint and draw, alone. Initially he rented a wing of a convent but in 1932 he built a villa at Monte Calvario, Imperia, Liguria and employed several housekeepers, the last of whom inherited the house. It was decorated in an Art Deco geometric design in green, orange and violet. He advertised in 'The Times' for artists who wished to have a month's holiday on the Riviera. Among those who went were Epstein and his wife. Wood died of cardiac asthma in 1935. He was buried in the English cemetery at Diano Marina, near Imperia.

In contrast, Mackintosh and his beloved Margaret moved *together* to the south of France, when finances were low, where they could live cheaply and Mackintosh could paint. Both couples were childless.

By 1920, Mackintosh had turned away from architecture towards art producing many beautiful paintings of flowers and landscapes as well as textile designs and book covers but Wood, although no longer practising, maintained a keen interest until the end of his life. Many cuttings from architectural journals were found amongst his belongings.

On his death in 1935, Wood's estate was £42,991 11s. 5d. When Charles' wife Margaret died, in 1933, their joint estate was £88.12s 6d.

In 2011 Rochdale MBC, the Borough where the majority of Wood and Sellers' buildings are found, was awarded a £1,975,000 grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund to conserve and promote the heritage of Wood's home town Middleton, in particular the largest cluster of Edgar Wood work in and around the town centre. This was the culmination of research on the architect supported by RMBC, Link4Life and English Heritage, which continues today led by volunteers who also provide tours of Middleton's Edgar Wood heritage.

## References:

The photographs were provided by Rochdale MBC.

Fig 1 by Andy Marshall [www.andymarshall.co](http://www.andymarshall.co)

'Long Street Methodist Church and Schools – A Brief Guide' – Friends of Long Street Methodist Church

'Edgar Wood – Middleton Buildings' – Rochdale B.C. and the Friends of Edgar Wood.

'Edgar Wood, A Notable Manchester Architect' by J.H.G. Archer, Transactions of the Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society 1963-64

'Oxford Dictionary of National Biography':

Charles Rennie Mackintosh – Alan Crawford,

Edgar Wood – John H. G. Archer

'The Furniture Design of Edgar Wood' - Jill Seddon

'The Quest for Charles Rennie Mackintosh' – John Cairney

[www.manchesterhistory.net](http://www.manchesterhistory.net)

Whitworth Art Gallery [www.whitworth.manchester.ac.uk](http://www.whitworth.manchester.ac.uk)

Manchester Art Gallery [www.manchestergalleries.org](http://www.manchestergalleries.org)

Carol J. Hardie

## NEWS

STANLEY DOCK: As we go to press a development scheme is nearing completion in this listed dock. The former North Warehouse plus adjoining Rum warehouse will shortly become a four-star Hotel and Conference Centre venue - anticipated opening in July. It is, rather oddly, to be named '**The Titanic**', even though there already exists in the city centre another prestige Hotel: '**30 James Street: the home of the Titanic**'. Not surprisingly, the owner of the latter is somewhat angry!

It is good to see the handsome banded-brick listed building by Norman Shaw in James St. in use again, with the tiled floor map of Latin America looking pristine. When we visited a while ago, the long empty former office building was looking very sad. Now fully restored, it seems to be busy.

There is also another, much smaller 'hotel' in the form of a smart boat named '**Titanic**' moored in the Albert Dock

Reported by Annette Butler

