

Breeze Blocks and Bolshevism: Housing Policy and the Origins of the Building Research Station 1917-21

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The Building Research Station (BRS) is widely recognised as the first government organisation in the world dedicated to research in construction. First established in 1921 at Acton in west London, the BRS created a model that was subsequently adopted across the globe, in both the English-speaking and other parts of the world (Building Research Station 1971, p. 211 and pp. 223-226). In outline, the story of how the BRS – later known as the Building Research Establishment (BRE) – came into being is well known. As the government became increasingly committed to a major housebuilding programme – the Homes fit for Heroes campaign launched by Lloyd George at the end of the first world war – at a time when both materials and labour were in short supply, it became evident that non-traditional methods and materials would be needed and therefore that research was required to establish which were suitable. But whereas the process by which the state became involved in a programme to build 500,000 houses has been extensively investigated by historians using unpublished government papers (Johnson 1968, Wilding 1970, Gilbert 1970, Swenarton 1981, Fraser 1996), the process by which it became involved in building research has not been subjected to the same kind of historical scrutiny. Instead the existing accounts of the origins of the BRS (many of them published to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the BRS in 1971) have either been produced by the BRS itself (White 1965, Lea 1971, Building Research Station 1972) or by those personally involved in its formation or activities (Heath and Hetherington 1946, Atkinson 1971).

Perhaps inevitably, retrospective accounts of this sort tend to smooth over the conflicts and controversies involved in major historical developments and suggest a kind of inevitability to the outcome – as though the introduction of a government organisation for building research after the first world war was a foregone conclusion. But if we go behind the scenes and look at unpublished government papers, we see that – on the contrary – the proposal for government-funded building research was from the start a highly controversial innovation, the adoption and implementation of which was by no means assured. Championed by those who believed that the war had permanently changed the relations between social classes and that a new ‘social contract’ was required from the government, building research was equally vehemently opposed by those who believed that, after the war, things should go back to ‘normal’ (i.e. as they had been before the war) or something close to it – and therefore that there was no need for the government to undertake building research.

In the summer of 1917 the Cabinet faced what appeared to be a major crisis in the prosecution of the war, with engineering workers on strike and widespread industrial unrest. A commission of

enquiry was set up in June 1917 which reported that a significant cause of industrial unrest was the housing shortage and recommended that, if nothing else, “announcements should be made of policy as regards housing” (Parliamentary Papers 1917-18, pp. 6-7; Swenarton 1981, pp. 70-72). Accordingly on 24 July 1917 the Cabinet authorised an announcement of the government’s intentions for postwar housing and two days later the President of the Local Government Board (LGB) appointed a committee to investigate the questions of building construction that would arise (NA, CAB 23/3, WC 194, 24 July 1917; Parliamentary Papers 1918, p. 3).

While the committee took its name from the chairman, the well-known Liberal MP Sir John Tudor Walters, its driving force, and the principal author of its report, was Raymond Unwin, formerly the pre-eminent designer of the pre-war garden city movement. In 1914 Unwin had entered government at the LGB before moving on in 1915 to head the Department of Explosive Supply at the Ministry of Munitions, where he was responsible for the housing developments at Gretna and elsewhere (Pepper and Swenarton 1978, pp. 368-374; Swenarton 1981, pp. 48-66; Miller 1996, pp. 149-160). As well as Unwin, the Tudor Walters committee included another leading architect with direct experience of delivering state housing in wartime conditions – Frank Baines, the director of the Office of Works, whose 1915 Well Hall estate for the Woolwich Arsenal was a tour de force of picturesque design. But Baines and Unwin differed markedly in their ideas about housing and on the Tudor Walters committee Baines was a marginal figure: he resigned from the committee in September 1918, shortly before its report was signed (Parliamentary Papers 1918 p. 3; Pepper and Swenarton 1978, pp. 368-373).

Following its formation in July 1917, it was immediately evident to the Tudor Walters committee that the resources of traditional building would not be sufficient for a major postwar housebuilding programme; and therefore, if untried alternative methods were to be used as a supplement, research and experiment were needed to establish which ones were safe and satisfactory in performance. During September 1917 the materials sub-committee, which was chaired by Unwin, discussed the problem and reached the conclusion that for the postwar housing programme

Timber will not be available except to a very limited extent. New methods and materials of construction must, therefore, be sought, and these can only be adopted with advantage after careful test and experiment.

Tests were needed, they said, on the use of concrete in place of timber for floors and roofs of cottages, and on the penetration of air and moisture through walls of concrete compared with those of brick. In addition, they wanted investigation into the possibilities of increasing the output of timber and brick by such means as new processes in brick-making and the artificial seasoning and sterilising of timber (NA, DSIR 3/51, Memo on Research in Building Materials and Methods of Construction by AS Barnes, September 1917).

Already, on 30 August 1917, Unwin had contacted the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research (DSIR), the department established the previous year to direct government research, and asked

What procedure his committee should adopt in order to instigate some research into building materials generally, but with special reference to the use of concrete as a substitute for brick or wood in the construction of cottages.

(NA, DSIR 3/51, Memorandum on enquiry by R Unwin, 30 August 1917)

At this stage the request for building research had the support of the LGB (NA, DSIR 3/51, Note on interview with Sir Horace Munro, 29 June 1917) and accordingly on 3 October the Advisory Council of the DSIR agreed to the formation of a Building Materials Research Committee (BMRC) to undertake the research required by the Tudor Walters Committee (NA, DSIR 3/51, Minute of Advisory Council, 3 October 1917). To ensure close liaison between the two committees, it was decided that Unwin would be chairman of the BMRC and E. Leonard, the secretary to the Tudor Walters Committee, would be its secretary (NA, DSIR 3/51, Lyon to Unwin, 5 October 1917). Tudor Walters was told by the Secretary of the DSIR, Sir Frank Heath, that as chairman Unwin would direct the researches and that the "Committee would only meet when the Chairman thought it necessary to consult his colleagues" (NA, DSIR 3/51, Heath to Tudor Walters, 1 October 1917). The other members of the BMRC were the chief engineer at the London County Council (LCC), GW Humphreys; the architect ES Prior, as representative of the Royal Institute of British Architects; and Seebohm Rowntree, who was already involved with research on floor coverings at his York factory and was, as Beatrice Webb noted, "eager to spend his time and money" on housing questions (NA, DSIR 3/51, memorandum by AS Barnes, September 1917, and letters of invitation to Humphreys, Prior and Rowntree, October 1917; Cole 1952, p. 86).

The recommendation for the establishment of the BMRC had been achieved with comparative ease. Thereafter however the progress of research into new building methods was rather less smooth than this first step suggested, and was a good deal more problematic than is usually implied (Heath and Hetherington 1946, pp. 282-283; Bowley 1966, p. 190; Lea 1971, p. 13). The Advisory Council on 3 October 1917 had recommended only the formation of the BMRC; its scope and, most importantly, its financial allocation had still to be settled. Here a major difference of view soon emerged, based on the two very different conceptions of government policy, and specifically postwar housing, then current in Whitehall, as represented primarily by the Ministry of Reconstruction and the LGB (Swenarton 1981, pp. 67-87).

The Tudor Walters Committee, like the Ministry of Reconstruction, believed that central government should take responsibility for the postwar housing programme and should ensure, by whatever means might be necessary, the building of some 300,000 houses within two years after the war. In contrast, the LGB preferred to see postwar housing policy as a development of, rather

than a departure from, prewar traditions; housing would remain the responsibility of local authorities and the role of central government would be merely to offer financial assistance. The view taken by the Tudor Walters Committee implied that resources should be made to match the requirements of the housing programme, whereas the view of the LGB suggested the opposite. In the first case, new methods of building would play a major role in the housing programme and building research would be essential to decide which methods should be used. In the latter case, new methods would be used only where and if they reduced the cost of building, and research would be confined to those methods that could be expected to reduce costs.

These opposing views reflected a wider division within the government. In the months following the armistice, faced with the prospect of “three-quarters of Europe converted to Bolshevism”, Lloyd George finally persuaded the Cabinet to adopt the housing policy associated with the Ministry of Reconstruction; as the government spokesman told MPs, “the money we are going to spend on housing is an insurance against Bolshevism and Revolution”. But, even so, many influential interests, both outside and within government, remained opposed to the new programme, which was regarded by the City and the Treasury as a costly extravagance antithetical to ‘sound finance’ (NA CAB 23/9, WC 539, Lloyd George, 3 March 1919; Parliamentary Debates 1919, cxiv col. 1956, W Astor, 8 April 1919; Fraser 1996, pp. 186-188; Swenarton 1981, pp. 70-81 and 117-119).

In relation to building research, these differences of opinion first emerged in January 1918. In response to requests received from the Tudor Walters Committee, on 3 January 1918 the BMRC submitted to the Advisory Council of the DSIR a report in which it proposed a wide-ranging programme of research into building materials. The proposal covered three main areas: experiments in constructional work, mainly involving substitutes for timber in walls, floors and roofs; tests in timber, including artificial seasoning and tests on specimens from alternative sources of supply; and research into the “effect on comfort and health” of certain new methods, primarily tests on the water resistance and thermal conductivity of various forms of concrete walls. In all, the report proposed 12 different researches and its estimate of the cost of the programme (£5740) included a liberal allowance of £1200 for researches still to be specified. Although the total might seem a lot, the BMRC wished “to point out that if, as a result of the suggested researches, a saving of only £1 can be effected in the cost of construction of each of the cottages contemplated under the housing scheme, the saving to the nation would be £300,000” (NA, DSIR 3/51, First Report of the BMRC, 3 January 1918).

The response of the LGB came in a letter to the Secretary of the DSIR dated 9 January. The LGB raised two questions in regard to the BMRC’s report: whether previous experience or experiments had not already answered the questions proposed for research; and whether “the new methods and forms of construction will in fact spell economy in building” (NA, DSIR 3/51, Willis to Heath, 9 January 1918). In view of this comment from the sponsoring department, the Advisory Council of

the DSIR could scarcely do other than refer back the BMRC report. The programme proposed, the DSIR noted, “will extend over a longer period and involve a larger expenditure than was proposed by the [Advisory] Council in the first instance” (NA, DSIR 3/51, note by Lyons, 15 Jan 1918). Ostensibly to strengthen the committee, but in reality to put a check on what the Office of Works called its “unnecessary and extravagant” demands (NA, DSIR 3/51, Earle to Heath, 23 January 1918), representatives of the Office of Works and the LGB were added to its membership. These were RJ Allison, the principal architect at the Office of Works, who had been responsible for the 1917 housing scheme for the Royal Aircraft Factory at Farnborough; and PM Crosthwaite, an engineering inspector at the LGB (NA, DSIR 3/51, Lloyd to Unwin, 28 January 1918). Instead of approving the research programme as a whole, the DSIR decided to appoint two technical officers, Tabor and Davies, to review and report on each item in the programme, reserving to itself the right to approve or reject each item on its merits. The function of this was revealed by DSIR chief Frank Heath: “As each section of work is reviewed by these two officers, it comes up to the Advisory Council for approval [...] By proceeding in this manner, the Department will only be committed to particular investigations” (NA, DSIR 3/51, minute by Heath, 10 April 1918).

The result was that the researches undertaken by the BMRC were considerably fewer in number, and took considerably longer to complete, than had originally been envisaged by the committee. Approval was eventually obtained for six main investigations. Researches into timberless floors (reinforced concrete, hollow brick etc) and the stability of thin walls were approved by the Advisory Council in March 1918. These were followed in June by investigations into the transmission of heat and gases through, and the condensation of moisture on, walls of concrete and brick and into new kinds of cooking ranges (NA, DSIR 3/51, Minutes of Advisory Council, 6 March 1918 and 5 June 1918). In addition, later in 1918, approval was secured for two other projects related to the housing programme: the use of slag and breeze as aggregates for concrete and the properties of lime mortar as an alternative to Portland cement (NA, DSIR 3/50, BMRC, 11th meeting, 6 June 1918, and 12th meeting, 9 October 1918; Parliamentary Papers 1920 pp. 60-61).

These investigations eventually produced useful results. The tests on floors, for instance, showed that composite floors of brick, tile or concrete reinforced with steel bars performed satisfactorily under the loads found on the upper floors of small houses and could be regarded as a suitable alternative to floors of timber (Department of Scientific and Industrial Research 1921a). The test on walls showed that walls of concrete blocks had a greater resistance to crushing than those of brick but that their thermal performance was inadequate unless a cavity was provided and one of the skins was of coke breeze (Department of Scientific and Industrial Research 1921b and 1921c).

These were results of obvious relevance to the housing programme launched by the Addison Act of 1919. But, due in large part to the delays arising from the procedure adopted for the BMRC, they were not made available in time to be taken into account in selecting new methods for use in the housing programme. In May 1920 the Ministry of Health (the successor to the LGB, set up by

Lloyd George in 1919 to deliver the Homes fit for Heroes programme) complained that no report of the findings of the BMRC had been made available (NA, HLG 52/881, Astor Committee, 18th meeting, 19 May 1920); and it was not until July 1920 that, at the instigation of the Ministry, the first results of the BMRC's investigations (on walls) were published, in the Ministry's journal *Housing* (NA, DSIR 3/50, BMRC, 39th meeting, 3 June 1920; *Building Materials Research Committee* 1920, pp. 10-11). By this date, under pressure from the Ministry, most of the large municipalities had already entered into contracts with various firms for houses built using new methods and/or materials (Marriner 1976, pp. 152-189; Swenarton 1981, p. 125).

During 1919 the attention of the DSIR was focused not on new methods required for the housing programme but in a rather different direction. At the beginning of 1919, with the adoption by the government of the housing campaign, the Advisory Council endorsed a proposal from the BMRC calling for a permanent body to be established to conduct building research (NA, DSIR 4/1, Advisory Committee, Memorandum on Building Research, January 1919, and Minute of 8 January 1919). The recommendation however was rejected by Lord Curzon who, as Lord President of the Privy Council, was the minister with responsibility for the DSIR. Instead Curzon, a prominent member of the country landowners lobby, gave his approval to a rival proposal much closer to his heart— the revival of traditional techniques of earth construction proposed by the Department of Agriculture for the small holdings programme, notably at the Amesbury experimental settlement (Swenarton 2003, pp. 113-117).

Accordingly, it was only in the autumn of 1919, when the Cabinet realised that the shortage of bricks and bricklayers was threatening the entire housing programme, that renewed action was taken to secure research into new methods and materials. On 27 October 1919 the Minister of Health, Christopher Addison, submitted a Cabinet memorandum in which the use of new methods ranked high among the proposals for “drastic action” to address the problems faced by the housing programme (NA, CAB 24/92, CP3, Memorandum by Addison, 27 October 1919). While rejecting Addison's call for an effective system of building control, which was vehemently opposed by private enterprise and the City as well as the Treasury, the Cabinet was happy to endorse the wider use of new methods of construction. Research was therefore needed to establish which methods were satisfactory and at the beginning of November 1919 Addison asked whether the DSIR was prepared to undertake this (NA, DSIR 4/1, Minute of Advisory Committee, 5 November 1919). At this date, with the BMRC concluding its programme of research, there was no organisation at the DSIR capable of conducting the work requested by the Ministry of Health. Accordingly on 17 December the Advisory Council renewed its recommendation for the establishment of a Building Research Board (NA, DSIR 4/1, Minute of Advisory Committee, 17 December 1919). By this date Curzon had been succeeded as Lord President by AJ Balfour, one of the leading advocates of industrial research, and this time the recommendation was accepted.

Although the DSIR had agreed to the establishment of a Building Research Board (BRB), progress in its formation was, in view of the urgency of the request from the Ministry of Health, dilatory in the extreme. In February 1920 the Department decided to “go slowly with the establishment of the

Board and to build it up as suggestions for really good men were secured” (NA, DSIR 4/1, Meeting of Sub-Committee appointed by Advisory Council, 26 February 1920). As a result the BRB was not constituted until June 1920. In the absence of a single person combining technical qualifications with a “general reputation”, it was decided to separate the functions of Chairman of the Board and Director of Research. Lord Salisbury, an acknowledged authority on housing and a person of “wide outlook” and national standing, agreed to become chairman and HO Weller, an engineer from the Indian Civil Service, was appointed director (NA, DSIR 4/1, Note on BRB, 3 February 1920, and letter from Salisbury to Heath, 11 February 1920). On its formation the BRB took over the DSIR’s existing activities in building research, including the experimental earth cottages at Amesbury and also the BMRC, which was finally wound up in December 1920 (NA, DSIR 3/50, 40th meeting of the BMRC, 3 December 1920).

The selection of the members of the Board proved tortuous. The DSIR proposed Sir Aston Webb (representing the architectural profession), Major-General Heath (formerly Engineer-in-Chief to the British armies in France), and GW Humphreys (the LCC Chief Engineer and a member of the BMRC), all of whom agreed to serve, plus representatives of the Ministry of Health and Office of Works. As its representative the Ministry of Health nominated SB Russell, Unwin’s former assistant at Gretna and now chief architect, alongside Unwin, at the Ministry. As regards the Office of Works representative, the strong preference at the DSIR was for RJ Allison (chief architect under Baines at the Office of Works and a member of the BMRC) rather than Baines, who was regarded as something of a contrarian; as one senior official put it, “I trust there may be no doubt about this nomination, as if Sir Frank Baines were nominated I think the whole business might just as well stop at the present moment” (NA, DSIR 4/1, Sir M. Fitzmaurice to Ogilvie, 9 June 1920). But when the Office of Works was approached by the DSIR about a nomination, the response was frosty in the extreme. Under the mercurial entrepreneur Sir Alfred Mond, the Office of Works had pushed repeatedly but unsuccessfully to be given the lead role in Whitehall for the housing programme (NA, CAB 24/72 GT 6552, memorandum by Sir A Mond, 23 December 1918; CAB 24/93 CP 107, memorandum by Mond, 11 November 1919; CAB 24/107 CP 1455, memorandum by Mond, 14 June 1920; Swenarton 1981, p. 124); and the department was by no means pleased at this latest incursion into what it regarded as its rightful territory. The DSIR was informed in June 1920 that the Office of Works “did not think much” of the request to nominate a representative on the board; “their own Department had conducted a great deal of research work on the subjects concerned during the war... they had got many valuable results and they were still carrying on such work”; moreover appointment of a representative to the BRB would take up the time of a busy officer (NA, DSIR 4/1, interview with Sir L Earle, 24 June 1920). In the end Mond relented, albeit “only with some hesitation and reserve”; he was “somewhat surprised that this Department, as the Government Building Department, should not have been consulted either as to the desirability of establishing the Board or to its membership” (P77/40v and 41, DSIR 4/1, letter from Sir L Earle, 24 June 1920) and, in a clear snub, nominated neither Baines nor Allison but a staff architect, AR Myers. Only when the status of the departmental representatives was elevated from associate members to full members did the Office of Works agree to Allison replacing Myers as its representative on the board (NA, DSIR 4/1, letter from HM Office of Works, 16 August 1920).

Until the latter part of 1921 the BRB concentrated almost entirely on questions relating to cottage construction for the housing programme. The preservation of stone, largely in connection with Lethaby's work on Westminster Abbey, was almost the only subject not related to housing in which the board took an interest at this stage (NA, DSIR 4/4, BRB, first meeting, 24 June 1920, and third meeting, 25 November 1920; Parliamentary Papers 1921 p. 49). But even on questions connected with the housing programme, work on research was considerably delayed. Rather than depending on existing establishments such as the LCC School of Building at Brixton or the National Physical Laboratory, as the BMRC had done, it was decided that the BRB should have its own experimental station. In the autumn of 1920 the Board took over from the Ministry of Health a site at Acton in west London for use as a Building Research Station and early in October 1920 the Board notified the Office of Works of its requirements in terms of accommodation; but by February 1921 nothing had happened and so it was decided that a contractor should be engaged instead (NA, DSIR4/5, BRB, fourth meeting, 18 February 1921). As a result it was not until July 1921, just as the Addison Act housing programme was being axed by the Cabinet (NA, CAB 24/126 CP 3111, memorandum by Mond, 7 July 1921; NA, CAB 24/126, Amended Draft Statement by the Minister of Health; Parliamentary Debates, cxliv cols. 1483-1485, A Mond, 14 July 1921; Swenarton 1981, pp. 133-135) that the modest suite of buildings at Acton – essentially, timber huts containing small engineering and chemical laboratories, workshops and offices, plus an open-air space for full-size tests – was completed and ready for occupation (NA, DSIR 4/4, BRB, third meeting, 25 November 1920, and Director's Report to sixth meeting, 27 July 1921; Parliamentary Papers 1921 pp. 48-49; Lea 1971, p. 16). It was only then that the BRB was in a position to commence the researches on Portland cement, concrete, sand-lime bricks, jointless floors, built-up timber beams and other subjects that the Ministry of Health had requested in November 1919 (NA, DSIR 4/5, BRB, Director's Report to eighth meeting, 14 October 1921; NA, DSIR 4/1, Carmichael to Heath, 26 November 1919). Self-evidently, this was too late to be of any use in the Addison housing programme.

To summarise the origins of the BRS: organisations for the conduct of building research were established by the DSIR in 1917 and 1920 in order to provide the information on non-traditional methods of construction required for the postwar housing programme. But the work of the first, the BMRC, was both curtailed and delayed as a result of the disagreement within the government over the nature of the postwar housing programme and the role that new methods would play. It was only late in 1919, when the shortage of materials and labour required for conventional construction threatened to bring the housing programme to a halt, that a more secure organisation, the BRB, was authorised; but it was not until mid-1921 that its research station at Acton was ready for occupation and in a position to commence its researches. The outcome was that new methods were extensively adopted for the housing programme with the neither the Ministry of Health nor the local authorities involved knowing the answers to the questions originally posed in 1917. There was a further irony. Between the end of 1918 and the middle of 1921 virtually no fresh researches into new methods were commenced by the BMRC or the BRB. This period coincided almost exactly with that in

which the government was fully committed to the housing programme for which the new methods, and the research, were required.

The abandonment of the housing programme in July 1921 had serious implications for building research. The Ministry of Health had been interested in research only in order to provide information on alternatives to traditional building for the housing programme and, once the housing programme was brought to a halt, its interest in the promotion of research disappeared. This change was strikingly demonstrated by the fact that for three years from October 1921, when SB Russell left the Ministry to return to private practice, the Ministry did not consider it necessary to be represented on the Board (NA, DSIR 4/1, Weller to Salisbury, 4 October 1921, and Forber to Heath, 22 October 1924). Since it was at the instigation of the Ministry of Health that the BRB and the BRS had been established, this inevitably raised questions about their future (NA, DSIR 4/7, BRB, 21st meeting, 28 November 1923; NA, DSIR 4/2, Report by the Building Research Board, December 1923, and Heath to Earle, 3 January 1924). It was only with the return to an energetic policy of local authority housebuilding under the Wheatley Act of 1924 that the future of the Building Research Station was assured. In October 1924, Minister of Health John Wheatley renewed the representation of the Ministry on the Board, with Unwin being nominated as the Ministry's representative (NA, DSIR 4/1, Forber to Heath, 22 October 1924). The following year (as will be shown in a subsequent paper) Wheatley's successor as Minister of Health, Neville Chamberlain, went much further. As part of his campaign to get local authorities to adopt non-traditional materials and methods, Chamberlain demanded a major expansion of the BRB to enable it to undertake the research required for the housing programme. The outcome was the construction of a much larger experimental facility at Garston, near Watford in Hertfordshire, to which the BRS removed in 1925 and where the BRS (and later the BRE) has remained ever since (Parliamentary Papers 1925, p. 6 and p. 55; Lea 1971, pp. 17-18; Atkinson 1971, p. 447).

The overall conclusion of this study might therefore be presented as follows. It was undoubtedly the case that, as Julian Amery, the then Minister for Housing and Construction put it in 1971, the "creation of the BRS in 1921 was stimulated by the housing drive that followed the First World War; Lloyd George's great cry of 'Homes fit for Heroes'" (Building Research Station 1972, p. 188). But this housing programme was itself contested. While sections of government saw it as the essential token of a new compact with a working class trained in the use of arms, other powerful interests – industry, the City, rural landowners – vigorously opposed the housing programme and were well placed to obstruct it, notably via the Treasury. The LGB, the department responsible for housing until Lloyd George replaced it with the Ministry of Health, was sceptical, if not actively hostile, as to a lesser degree was the Office of Works. The result was that initiatives on building research were constantly undermined. The case for a building research programme was advanced repeatedly – notably by the Tudor Walters Committee in the autumn of 1917; the DSIR's Advisory Council at the beginning of 1919; the Cabinet in November 1919; and the DSIR's Advisory Council in December 1919 – but on each occasion action was delayed or curtailed by Whitehall or

Westminster. Although a BRB was set up in mid-1920 and the BRS opened in temporary buildings at Acton a year later, it was by no means certain how long they would survive. It was only with the emergence of a new consensus around housing in 1924-1925 – a convergence of the policies of the first Labour government with those of Neville Chamberlain’s ‘New Conservatism’ – that the long-term future of the BRS finally became assured.

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