

Hillcrest & Briarhill, Rochdale Road Assessment of Significance

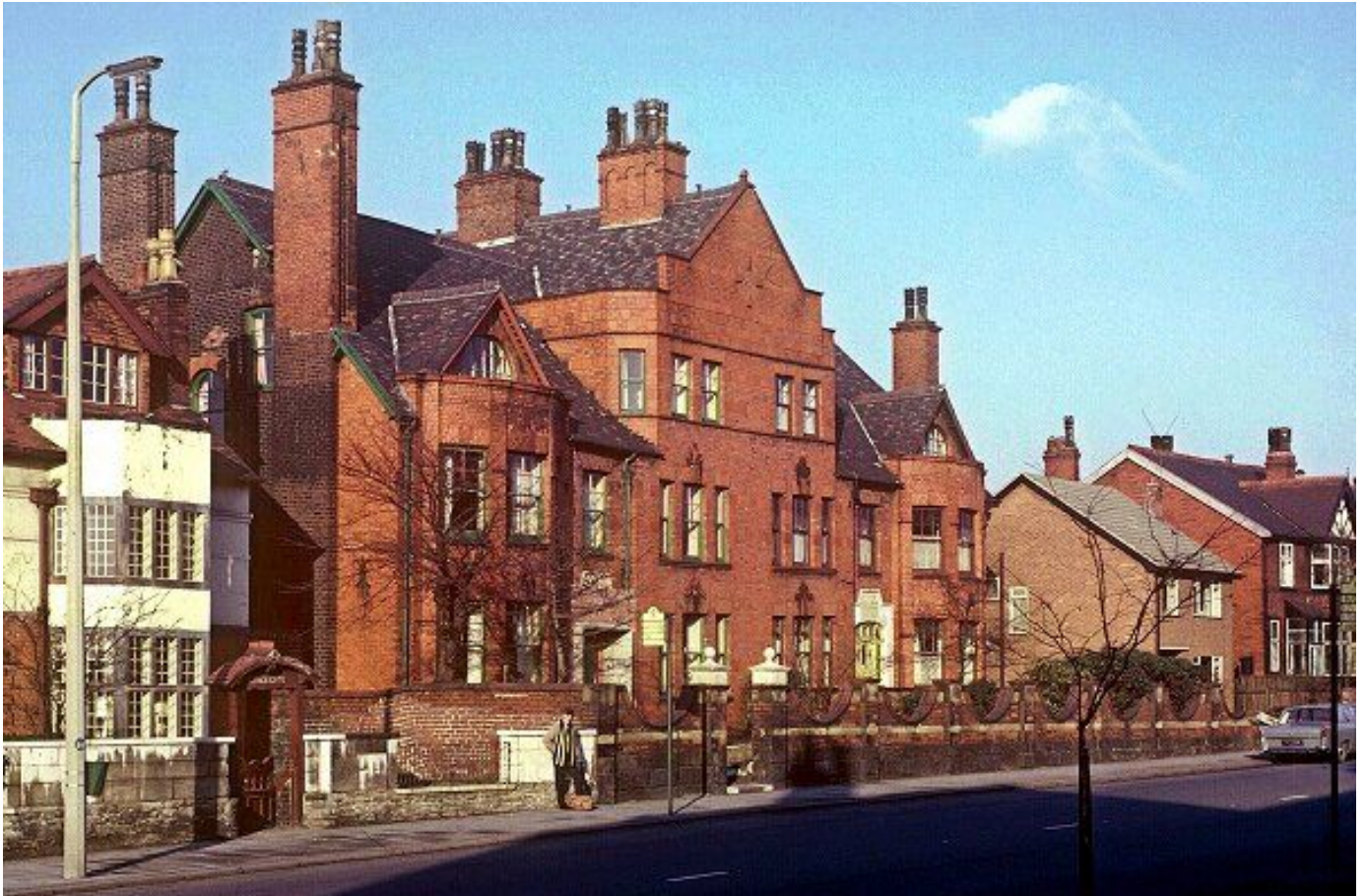


Plate 1 Hillcrest & Briarhill c. 1980 Photo: W. J. Smith from Heritage Trust for the North West archive.

The historical, aesthetic, evidential and communal significance of
37-39 Rochdale Road, Middleton - a pair of semi-detached houses
designed by Edgar Wood

Written by Nick Baker, Victoria Brandon, Richard Fletcher, David Morris and
Veronica Smith. Compiled and Edited by David Morris *July 2016*

Heritage Trust for the North West
Higherford Mill, Gisburn Road
Barrowford, Nelson, Lancashire BB9 6JH
Phone: 01282 877 686 Fax: 01282 691 511

Heritage Trust for the North West

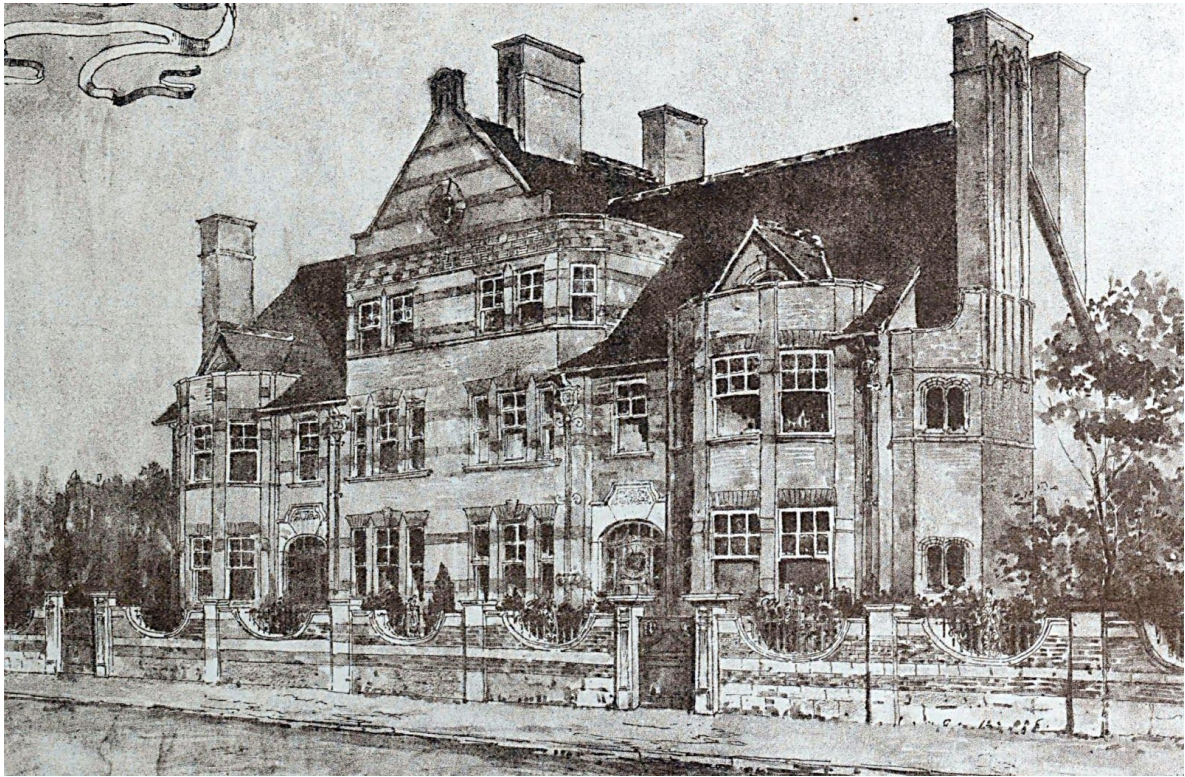


Plate 2 Edgar Wood's original design illustration from 'the Architect', 20th October 1893.
Source: Manchester Libraries, Information and Archives, Manchester City Council



Plate 3 1970s image of Hillcrest & Briarhill as built. Source: Middleton Local Studies Library.

FOREWORD

Hillcrest & Briarhill, 37-39 Rochdale Road, Middleton have not been previously studied. Until very recently, almost nothing was known about them, not even their names. They were believed to be Edgar Wood designs of the 1890s. However, they did not fit the romantic image of Wood as an vernacular revivalist.

Everything was wrong about the building. It was too big, too strident, in the wrong materials and the wrong style, if it had any style at all. As a consequence, Nikolaus Pevsner avoided it in his 1969 South Lancashire edition of the Buildings of England Series, as did Clare Hartwell and Matthew Hyde in the larger 2004 volume. Even John Archer only mentioned it once. English Heritage likewise left it off when updating the area's listed buildings in the 1980s. The problem was that neither the building nor its historical context had been studied. It was clearly art nouveau of sorts but its significance was unknown.

Rochdale M.B.C. had the foresight to include Hillcrest & Briarhill in the Middleton Conservation Area of 1978. This at least protected the building from demolition but not from incremental alteration. It lost the two southern chimneys and most of the interior features of Hillcrest and, tragically, almost all the art nouveau stained glass, which, as this study shows, was some of the first in the world. Nevertheless, much still survives, including most of the interior of Briarhill and the building has a strong communal value.

With the opening up of national archives through the internet, there has come a reappraisal of the Arts & Crafts narrative and a more nuanced and accurate story is now emerging. Edgar Wood is seen as one of the movement's most important designers - England's pioneer both of art nouveau and art deco modernism. Only Charles Rennie Mackintosh of Scotland inhabits the same cultural space.

The report has involved a large amount of new research. Owing to the specialist nature of the subject, it explains the context that affects the significance of the building and how the significance impacts upon the conservation priorities. The writers are volunteers for Heritage Trust for the North West and members of the Edgar Wood Society. All have studied the Arts & Crafts Movement but each comes with a different specialism -

- Nick Baker has a BA (Joint Hons) in History & History of Art (Nottingham) and an MA in Art Gallery & Museum Studies (Manchester)
- Victoria Brandon has a BA (Hons) in Archaeology (Dunelm) and has a Diploma in Buildings Conservation (RIBA)
- Richard Fletcher is a genealogical and online researcher of many years standing
- David Morris holds a Master of Civic Design (Liverpool) and is a member of the Royal Town Planning Institute and Institute of Historic Buildings Conservation
- Veronica Smith has a BA (Hons) History & Fine Art (Aberystwyth), an MA in Art History and Visual Studies (Manchester) and completes an MA in Stained Glass Conservation and Heritage Management (York) September.

CONTENTS

FOREWORD	2
CONTENTS	3
SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANCE	7
1. EDGAR WOOD - ARTS & CRAFTS DESIGNER	8
33-39 Rochdale Road - An Expressive Twosome	9
Where do Hillcrest & Briarhill fit?	10
Art Nouveau, Arts & Crafts and the Vernacular Revival	11
Second Wave of Arts & Crafts Designers	13
2. TOWN AND COUNTRY DESIGN APPROACHES	14
Two Strands of Edgar Wood's Architectural Experimentation	14
Town and Country Designs 1884 to 1893	15
Town - Art Nouveau	16
Country - Vernacular	17
33-39 Rochdale Road - Set Piece Architectural Statements	17
From Set Piece to Synthesis	18
3. BAILLIE SCOTT - A COMPARABLE DESIGNER	19
Career Outline	19
Baillie Scott in the North-West	21
Blackwell	21
Designer, Artist and Writer	22
4. HILLCREST & BRIARHILL - NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL PUBLICATION	23
Historical Significance	24
Historiographical Significance	25
5. A UNIQUE ART NOUVEAU TOWN BUILDING	26

Edgar Wood's Art Nouveau Affiliations	26
Precedent for Edgar Wood's Mature Art Nouveau Synthesis	35
A Vital Pairing	36
33-39 Rochdale Road - High Art Antecedents	37
Antecedents of Redcroft & Fencegate	37
Antecedents of Hillcrest & Briarhill	39
National Collection of Pioneering Art Nouveau Architecture	41
Townhouses	43
C. F. A. Voysey – 14 and 16 Hans Road, London	43
A. H. Mackmurdo – 12 Hans Road, London	43
CR Ashbee – The Ancient Magpie and Stump, Cheyne Walk, London (destroyed)	43
Edgar Wood – Hillcrest & Briarhill	43
Detached Villas	44
Ernest Gimson – Inglewood, Leicester	44
WR Lethaby – The Hurst, Sutton Coldfield (destroyed)	44
Ernest Newton – Redcourt, Haslemere	44
Other Buildings	45
Henry Wilson – Ladbroke Grove Library	46
E. S. Prior – Harrow Music School	46
C. H. Townsend – Bishopsgate Institute	46
C. R. Mackintosh – Queen Margaret College Anatomical Dept (altered)	46
Edgar Wood – Temple Street Baptist Church, Middleton	46
Edgar Wood – Manchester & Salford Bank, Market Place, Middleton	46
Local Collection of Pioneering Semi-Detached Houses	47
6. INFLUENCE OF HILLCREST & BRIARHILL	48
Case Study 1 Regional Influence: Verdin Grammar School, Winsford, Cheshire	50
Case Study 2 National Influence: Belgrave Children's Hospital, London	51

Case Study 3 Local Influence: Abbey Hills Road and Greaves Arms P.H., Oldham	55
Experimental Architectonic Forms	56
Segmental Cut-out	57
Kneeled Gable	57
Attenuated Pilaster	58
Art Nouveau Carving over the Entrances	58
'Whiplash' Brackets	59
Upward Pointing Chevron	59
Plain Masonry as a Central Feature	59
Triangular Dormer and Diocletian Window	59
Antecedent Art Deco	60
Case Study 4 Architectonic Forms: Carnegie Library, West Derby, Liverpool	60
7. HILLCREST & BRIARHILL CLOSE UP	62
Exterior	63
William Morris - Building Materials Lecture	64
Interior Features	66
Layout	66
Natural Lighting	67
Hallway, Door Frames and Doors	68
Staircase	68
Morning/Withdrawing Room and Bedroom Above	69
Dining Room	69
8. DETAILS OF OWNERS AND OCCUPIERS	70
Hillcrest	70
Briarhill	70
9. WIDER SIGNIFICANCE - COMMUNAL VALUE	72
Middleton Heritage Community	72

Middleton Town Centre Conservation Area	73
Conservation Area Appraisal (2008) and Appraisal Maps (2010)	74
Conservation Area Management Plan (2010)	74
Core Strategy Planning Policies	75
North West Arts & Crafts Community	76
Scale and Nature of Communal Value	76
10. SIGNIFICANCE INFORMING CONSERVATION	77
Unique Early Art Nouveau and Antecedent Art Deco Building	77
Historical Settlement	77
Traditional Response - Wall Ties & Pattress plates	79
Contemporary Response - Informed Conservation	79
Briarhill - Art Nouveau Stained Glass	80
Briarhill - Surviving Original Roof Surface	81
Briarhill - Surviving Interior Paint Scheme?	82
Restoration Priorities	83
Priority 1 - Front Wall, Gateways & Gates	83
Priority 2 - Front Gardens	83
Priority 3 - Entrance Doorways	83
Priority 4 - Ornamental Water Goods	84
Priority 5 - Chimneys	84
Priority 6 - Fenestration	84
CONCLUSION	84
APPENDIX - LOCATION PLAN	86

SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANCE

1. Historic England identify four interlinked cultural heritage values that define significance, ranging from *evidential*, which is dependent on the inherited fabric of the place, through *historical* and *aesthetic*, to *communal* values which derive from people's identification with the place. Chapters 1 to 8 major on the first three while Chapter 9 addresses communal value. Chapter 10 discusses conservation issues.
2. In 1891/2, Edgar Wood built two pairs of semi-detached houses adjacent one another. It was a set-piece project where Hillcrest & Briarhill represented the urban tradition and Redcroft & Fencegate the rural.
3. They were state-of-the-art designs that expressed contrasting approaches to the design of a semi-detached pair of dwellings. Their significance is linked and they have group value where the qualities of the one illuminate the other.
4. They comprise two of a chronological series of nine semi-detached pairs of houses spanning Wood's career. The series illustrates how the urban and rural traditions were fused in his pioneering evolution towards architectural modernism.
5. The discovery that in 1893 Hillcrest & Briarhill were illustrated and described in architectural publications in Britain, USA and across Europe via an International Edition is *game-changing*. Wood's innovative design for Hillcrest & Briarhill was thus seen by architects across the western world.
6. The influence of the Hillcrest & Briarhill design can therefore be observed at national, regional and local scales. Its pioneering architectonic forms were subsequently used in both art nouveau and art deco design.
7. Hillcrest & Briarhill thus comprise one of the earliest art nouveau designs in the world, fractionally predating Victor Horta's famous Hotel Tassel, Brussels (UNESCO World Heritage List). They represent a uniquely British approach to art nouveau which adds interest and context to European *fin de siecle*.
8. Edgar Wood was part of a small group which included C. F. A. Voysey, C. H. Townsend and Henry Wilson... the most creative of a new wave which practised experimental freedom around shared principles. Hillcrest & Briarhill belong to a handful of pioneering designs created 1889-92. Their subsequent Arts & Crafts work would transform the architectural world between 1895 and 1905.
9. For such a significant building, the overall physical survival of Hillcrest & Briarhill is relatively good. The interior survival of Briarhill is good while that of Hillcrest is poor. It is prominent in a cluster of Edgar Wood buildings on a busy road.
10. Communal heritage value with regard to the heritage community and the wider population is very high. Visitor events and community activities involving the building occur regularly. Its significance is reflected in Rochdale Council's mainstream planning and economic policies. The heritage community considered the building significant as early as 1974.
11. The unusual and exceptional significance of Hillcrest & Briarhill impacts upon some of the usual conservation assumptions and priorities. A bespoke and specialist approach to conservation is therefore required.

1. EDGAR WOOD - ARTS & CRAFTS DESIGNER



Plate 4 Edgar Wood as a young man. Source: Middleton Local Studies Library

12. Edgar Wood (1860-1935, Plate 4) was an architect, artist, craftsman, conservationist and town planner. At the beginning of the twentieth century, he had a national and international reputation and was regarded as the most important avant-garde architect in the north of England.
13. Wood was born into a wealthy Middleton family in 1860. From an early age he had a passion for art and spent hours sketching with his friend, Fred Jackson, who later became a prominent artist. Wood instead trained as an architect, though he viewed architecture as an "art" and was consequently known as an artist-architect.
14. Initially based in Middleton, then Oldham in the late 1880s and early 90s and subsequently in Manchester, Edgar Wood showed dynamic change with regard to his work. It is Arts & Crafts seen through a northern prism. He had an unerring ability to be at the defining edge of artistic developments between 1884 and 1920, after which he retired. He was described his pupil G. A. E. Schwabe as someone with *"immense energy and great driving force to everyone he came in contact with"* and was *"the sort of man who always gets his own way"*.¹
15. Wood rejected large scale commercial practice and worked with a small number of assistants designing furniture, stained glass, sculpture, metal and plaster work as well as buildings. Many commissions were from friends and family in

¹ G.A.E. Schwabe, in a letter to J.H.G. Archer, dated 12 April 1950, quoted in John Archer, 'Edgar Wood and J. Henry Sellers: A Decade of Partnership and Experiment', in *Edwardian Architecture and its Origins*, ed. Alastair Service (London: Architectural Press, 1975), 384.

Middleton, Huddersfield and Hale, Cheshire. Influenced by the artistic and socialist writings of William Morris, he saw himself as an artisan serving the people of these localities.

16. He built up a national and international reputation as a progressive designer. From 1902 onwards, he worked with an Oldham architect, J. Henry Sellers, and from 1905 they created a series of radical new buildings of a type unseen before. With their flat reinforced concrete roofs and sometimes geometric patterns, they were among the first examples of the art deco or Moderne style in Europe.



Plate 5 The *expressive twosome* of Redcroft & Fencegate and Hillcrest & Briarhill. The original tall chimneys on three of the houses have been lowered in this photo. Those on Redcroft have since been restored. Photo: David Morris.

33-39 Rochdale Road - An Expressive Twosome

17. The two pairs of semi-detached houses, 33-39 Rochdale Road, or Redcroft & Fencegate and Hillcrest & Briarhill to give them their original names, were designed when Edgar Wood was a young architect based in Oldham. Built in 1891/2, they are not exactly 'early works', however, as Wood had been designing independently for seven or eight years by then. His earliest known building had been the substantial Rhodes Schools (1884 listed Grade II, see Plate 10). Instead, they were the culmination of his first phase of architectural experimentation and the springboard for the next one, which he marked by moving his principal office to Manchester the year after their construction.
18. "*When seen together from the south, the houses form an expressive twosome*"², states Rochdale Council's ten year old "The Buildings of Edgar Wood in Middleton Town Centre" guide, see Plate 5. When this was written, the dates of the two semi-detached pairs had not been established, the names of Hillcrest & Briarhill had yet to be discovered and their design had not been firmly attributed to Wood. Nevertheless, the writer instinctively realised that there was a lively *unity in contrast* - an expressive twosome is an appropriate description.

² The document is now somewhat dated but is a good overview of Wood's buildings in Middleton. It can be downloaded from <http://artsandcraftschurch.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Edgar-Wood-Guide-to-Middleton-Town-Centre.pdf>

19. Subsequent research by the Edgar Wood Society identified a close historical relationship between the designs. Redcroft & Fencegate were built in 1891 (not 1895, as once thought) and Hillcrest & Briarhill were built the following year, possibly delayed due to Edgar Wood losing an eye in an accident while building Redcroft. They are designed as an expressive pair with the smaller white design sitting within the frame of the larger red building when viewed from the south.
20. The precise design dates of both pairs are not known. The 1891 date of the building plans for Redcroft & Fencegate were recorded by J. H. G. Archer (the plans are now presumed lost as the Middleton archive was subsequently destroyed). For Hillcrest & Briarhill an undated watercolour sketch was published in 1893 (discussed below) while the property deeds indicate the build date was 1892.
21. There was some architectural development between the illustrated and constructed designs of Hillcrest & Briarhill which suggests the passing of a little time between design and construction. However, comparative assessment suggests that both pairs of houses are unlikely to have been designed before 1890.
22. In 1894, Edgar Wood submitted plans for a billiard room extension for A. E. Jones, owner of Briarhill. Ordnance survey maps suggest the extension was never built and the plans are now lost. It would have been erected in the northern garden, most likely with a connection to the staircase hall via the existing doorway.

Where do Hillcrest & Briarhill fit?

23. In the design for Redcroft & Fencegate, Edgar Wood uses:
 - a. the vernacular tradition of Lancashire/Cheshire farm buildings;
 - b. two types of red brick with white rendered upper floors and red roof tiles, thus providing strong colour and interest;
 - c. a run of windows at first floor reminiscent of a hand loom weaver's cottage.
24. The red and white materials and vernacular character predominate and the building can be easily understood as an early Arts & Crafts design.
25. Where do Hillcrest & Briarhill fit into this? Built a year later, they are monumental in comparison, built of uniform red brick and terracotta blocks. The asymmetrical facade of Redcroft & Fencegate gives it an irregular appearance, whereas Hillcrest & Briarhill has the large symmetrical proportions of a mansion apartment block.
26. There are some elements in common, e.g. both designs feature a strong single gable and a bay window cutting through the eaves with a dormer on top. However, they are presented very differently and Hillcrest & Briarhill have art nouveau elements such as the open curved detailing of the front door, fluid plaster detail over the hallway and tall pilasters on the double-height bow windows.
27. At the same time, the facade of Hillcrest & Briarhill suggests the very beginnings of modernism with simple geometric shapes and volumes, e.g. cylindrical bays, lunette windows and scalloped boundary wall and triangular gable and dormers.
28. This document seeks to explain this contrast found in these two pioneering Arts & Crafts designs and especially to understand the significance of Hillcrest & Briarhill, which are a quite unique pair of semi-detached houses.

Art Nouveau, Arts & Crafts and the Vernacular Revival



Plate 6 Hotel Tassel, no. 6 rue Paul-Emile Janson, Brussels (1893) designed by Victor Horta, UNESCO World Heritage List. Photo: Steve Cadman, Creative Commons Sharealike 2 license.

30. Nikolaus Pevsner stated... *“The term Art Nouveau comes from S. Bing’s shop in Paris opened late in 1895.... But the style is older. Traditionally it is supposed to have started fully mature in Victor Horta’s house, no. 6 rue Paul-Emile Janson in Brussels, (Plate 6) and that house was designed in 1892 and built in 1893. But it marks no more than the transfer of the style from the small to a larger scale and from design to architecture. The incunabula of Art Nouveau belong to the years 1883-8.”*³
31. When Edgar Wood began designing independently in 1884, he immediately embraced this *incunabula* of art nouveau which had begun in graphical form the year before with the publishing of Arthur H. Mackmurdo’s ‘Wren’s City Churches’. The transfer of graphical art nouveau to the architectural realm was something Wood addressed in his first years in practice as did a handful of others, most importantly Mackmurdo (1851-1942) himself.

³ Pg 48 The Sources of Modern Design by Nikolaus Pevsner 1968, reprinted 2002.

32. Their aim was to find a new style free from the historicism that had dominated architecture for over 200 years. Art Nouveau, or New Art as the British called it, was thus a stylistic movement mainly concerned with sophisticated urban architecture and design for the emerging middle classes of industrial Europe.
33. However, unlike Victor Horta and other European designers, Edgar Wood was also heavily influenced by the nascent Arts & Crafts and vernacular revival movements, which occurred at the same time. These were more broadly based in that they rejected machine made production and much of what came with it, and identified with the individual craftsperson creating handmade products. While the Arts & Crafts approach could be applied to urban buildings, the underlying driving force was a rejection of the city and its evils and the celebration of the countryside. In architecture, it emphasized truth to materials and the honesty of rural buildings. Tradition not style or historicism was the driving force.
34. Edgar Wood's early work consequently developed urban and rural strands - both under an Arts & Crafts umbrella - the former informed by the tradition of *town* design and art nouveau and the latter by *country* design and the vernacular revival.



Plate 7 1860 Red House, Bexleyheath, London Philip Webb & William Morris Photo: Ethan Doyle White Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0

35. The Arts & Crafts was thus a movement rather than a style. It was a generation's response to 100 years of the Gothic Revival - although Diane Haigh describes it as a direct descendant⁴ in that it embraced many of its underlying principles. The very beginnings of the Arts & Crafts movement are seen in 1859, when designer and artist William Morris, working with architect Philip Webb, built the Red House as a home for himself and his family. It was a homily to Gothic method and craftsmanship and a determined response to the mass-produced uniformity of Victorian industrial design and architecture (see Plate 7).
36. In 1861 Morris established Morris, Marshall, Faulkner and Co. which produced handcrafted decorative arts, furniture, fabrics and glass and this was followed by

⁴ Diane Haigh, Baillie Scott the Artistic House, Academy Editions, London 1995.

the creation of several 'guilds' for the promotion of crafted art as opposed to mechanical manufacture. These included the Century Guild of artist craftsmen established by Arthur Mackmurdo in 1883, The Art Workers' Guild established in 1884 and the Guild of Handicraft in 1888. The Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society was formed in London in 1887 to specifically promote the exhibition of decorative arts alongside fine arts. The common thread of all these groups was their desire to produce decorative art which was both beautiful and materially true.

Second Wave of Arts & Crafts Designers



Plate 8 1885 Studio House, 39 Frognal, Hampstead, London (listed Grade II), designed by Richard Norman Shaw for Kate Greenaway. Photo: Steve Cadman, Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 2.0.

37. The guilds were the transition to a second wave of the Arts and Crafts Movement which developed in the second half of the 1880s and early 1890s. The decade 1884/5 to 1894/5 was the time of initial experimentation for Edgar Wood and like-minded avant garde designers.

"Few eras have been as architecturally fecund as that between, roughly, 1885 and 1905; certainly no subsequent era in this country has produced so many buildings of such disparate invention. It was the last golden age."⁵

38. Some architects were developing the broad approach of Richard Norman Shaw (1831-1912) along specific Arts & Crafts lines (see Plate 8). Shaw was the perhaps the nation's leading secular architect and he brilliantly blended historical styles in

⁵ Jonathan Meades. Review of Peter Davey, 'Arts & Crafts Architecture' in The Guardian, 2nd June 1995.

an organic and convincing way, often with much visual theatre. This *Shavian* approach was developed by Shaw's pupils, including William Lethaby (1857-1931) and E. S. Prior (1852-1932), contemporaries of Edgar Wood. They played a leading part in the new movement which, in this form, was centred on London.

39. However, other architects such as Edgar Wood and C. H. Townsend (1851-1928), were part of a northern tradition and had a slightly different outlook. While embracing Shaw to a degree, they also experimented at a more fundamental level with art nouveau and vernacular forms and completely rejected historicism, which the Shavian approach partly accommodated. Nevertheless, their outlook was also fully of the same Arts & Crafts Movement. The two approaches were embraced by the movement's emphasis on artistic individuality and freedom in design.
40. This second wave began to be noticed both in London and the north in the years immediately following 1893, when Edgar Wood moved his architectural office from Oldham to Manchester. After creating an initial Arts & Crafts association in 1894/5, Edgar Wood established the Northern Art Workers Guild in 1896 in Manchester, thereby making the city the focus of the northern Arts & Crafts movement. Wood would never join the London set, though the Northern Art Workers' Guild was sometimes seen as an outpost of the Art Workers' Guild.

2. TOWN AND COUNTRY DESIGN APPROACHES



Plate 9 15 Queen Street, Oldham Edgar Wood's principal office until 1893. Photo: David Morris

Two Strands of Edgar Wood's Architectural Experimentation

41. From 1884 to 1894 Edgar Wood developed two lines of architectural enquiry. Both were characterised as *styleless* - in opposition to Victorian historicism - but they were quite different from each other. One could be called *country*, the other *town*.

42. The *country* strand was based around the traditional materials of the locality and the vernacular forms of various regions, which were eclectically mixed. The *town* strand was the development of art nouveau architectonic form by focussing on formality, geometric form, plain surfaces and naturalistic ornamentation.
43. Put simply, Hillcrest & Briarhill are *town houses* while Redcroft & Fencegate are *country houses* and the two can be loosely correlated as urban and rural expressions of Arts and Crafts design. Nb. the concept of vernacular-styled Arts & Crafts houses in sub-urban layouts still lay a decade or more in the future.
44. Edgar Wood's principal office of the late 1880s and early 1890s, 15 Queen Street, Oldham, was part of a Georgian town terrace in an industrial town, not a self-designed Arts & Crafts rustic retreat, as might have been expected in the later years of the movement. In order to fully illuminate his first floor drawing office, he subtly added two windows either side of the original, matching the style and materials, thus showing respect to the eighteenth century styling, see Plate 9. Hillcrest & Briarhill were a development of this same Georgian townhouse tradition. Nb. Wood's small Middleton office, located in his father's cotton mill, and his subsequent Manchester office, 78 Cross Street, are both destroyed.
45. In this dualistic way, Wood's designs of his first decade display the initial development of modern styleless architecture. Rhodes School, near Middleton (1884, listed Grade II), which has an expressive proto-art nouveau form belonged to the town strand, see Plate 10, whereas Langley Hall Farm (1885, destroyed) with its array of rustic features and materials clearly belonged to the country.



Plate 10 1884 Rhodes School, Middleton. Photo: Andy Marshall

Town and Country Designs 1884 to 1893

46. The following lists comprise Edgar Wood's known works of the period 1884 to 1893 divided into *town* and *country* influenced designs.

Town - Art Nouveau



Plate 11 1889 Temple Street Baptist Church, Middleton is Edgar Wood's first art nouveau church. The columns were originally topped with small pyramidal roofs. Photo: Andy Marshall.

47. 1884 *Rhodes Schools, Rhodes, Middleton* listed Grade II; 1885 *133 Manchester Old Road, Middleton* unlisted; 1886 *Co-op Long Street, Middleton*, destroyed; 1889 *Fountain & Horse Trough, Heywood Old Road, Birch* listed Grade II; 1889 *Guardian Buildings, Market Place, Middleton* unlisted/altered; 1889 *Manchester & County Bank, Middleton*, destroyed; 1889 *Temple St Baptist Church, Middleton* listed Grade II; 1890 *Oddfellows (now Ukrainian) Club, Oldham* unlisted; 1890c *Albion Buildings, Wood Street, Middleton*; 1891 *Rhodes Reading Rooms, Middleton* destroyed; c. 1891 *Union Street 129-145, Oldham*; 1892 *Hillcrest & Briarhill, 37 & 39 Rochdale Road Middleton* unlisted; 1892 *Manchester & Salford Bank, Market Place, Middleton* listed Grade II; 1892 *Unitarian Church & School, Manchester Old Road, Middleton* destroyed; 1892 *York Chambers, 38 Yorkshire Street, Oldham* unlisted/altered; 1892 *Whitworth Institute* competition entry with Thomas Taylor unbuilt; 1893 *Shop, 4 Middleton Gardens, Middleton* unlisted. **15 in total.**

48. Art nouveau, in the form of attenuation and naturalistic ornament first appeared in Edgar Wood's Middleton Co-operative Building (1886 destroyed). This was actually designed before Mackmurdo's celebrated art nouveau house, 8 Private Road, Enfield (1887 listed Grade II), thus showing Wood was developing art nouveau architecture at the cutting edge. Temple Street Baptist Church (1899 listed Grade II) with its attenuated columns, bright colours and geometrical forms is an excellent surviving example, see Plate 11.

Country - Vernacular



Plate 12 1889 Westdene, Middleton. Photo: Andy Marshall.

49. 1885 *Langley Hall Farm, Middleton* Destroyed; 1885 *Drywood Cottages, Heywood Old Road, Birch, Middleton* unlisted/altered; 1887 *West Lea, 161-163 Manchester Old Road, Middleton* unlisted; 1887 *Fountain, Middleton Gardens*, destroyed; 1889 *Albion Inn, Middleton*, destroyed; 1889 *Cricket Pavilion, Middleton* unlisted/altered; 1889 *Westdene, Archer Park, Middleton* unlisted; 1890 *Halecroft, 253 Hale Road, Altrincham* listed Grade II*; 1891 *Redcroft & Fencegate, 33 & 35 Rochdale Road, Middleton* listed Grade II; 1892 *Birch Villas, 531-535 Langley Lane, Birch, Middleton* unlisted; 1893 *Doris Terrace, Heywood Old Road, Birch, Middleton* unlisted; c.1893 *Tantallon, Castleton, Rochdale* unlisted; 1893 *Silver Street Methodist Church, Rochdale* listed Grade II. **13 in total.**

50. An early example of the vernacular inspiration is a pair of semi-detached houses, *West Lea, Middleton* (1887, unlisted). Externally, these stone houses are shaped by vernacular forms but implemented in such a manner so as not to be obvious. Internally, the styling has an eclectic mix of Japonaiserie, naturalistic and Adamesque forms. At *Westdene, Middleton* (1889, unlisted), which is otherwise of vernacular inspiration, art nouveau is nevertheless expressed in its attenuated qualities illustrating some crossover between the two strands, see Plate 12.

33-39 Rochdale Road - Set Piece Architectural Statements

51. At the end of this initial period of experimentation, *Redcroft & Fencegate* and *Hillcrest & Briarhill* were designed as set-piece architectural statements of rural/vernacular and town/art nouveau referenced design, see Plate 5. Though both are styleless and eclectic, the approximate reference point for *Redcroft & Fencegate* is an 18th century farm/textile house while that for *Hillcrest & Briarhill* is a Georgian town house.

52. The contrast is not just style. They also exhibit alternative approaches to semi-detached house design. For example, Redcroft & Fencegate are carefully shaped to hide their semi-detached nature while the Hillcrest & Briarhill explicitly express it. Underpinning both is Edgar Wood's efficient utilitarian planning - where architectural form followed function, not unlike subsequent modernism.

From Set Piece to Synthesis



Plate 13 1903 First Church of Christ Scientist, Manchester. Photo: David Morris

53. Shortly after Hillcrest & Briarhill, Edgar Wood began initial sketches for Long Street Methodist Church, Middleton (built 1899, listed Grade II*) designing in an art nouveau town church mould, while the adjacent Sunday School was designed in a rural vernacular way. The two sat facing one another across a central garden quadrangle as a single composition, conceptually like the pairing of Hillcrest & Briarhill with Redcroft & Fencegate.
54. Around 1899 Edgar Wood first began to fully synthesise the vernacular and art nouveau. The First Church of Christ Scientist, Manchester (1903 listed Grade I) was perhaps the first complete synthesis. It created a singularly new architectural aesthetic that defied all categorisation, see Plate 13. It is regarded by many as Wood's finest masterpiece.

55. The earlier 33-39 Rochdale Road pair of buildings informed the design of the First Church. For example, the church's large central gable with angled sides leading to wings each of which contains a vertical bow element, is conceptually like the art nouveau formalism of Hillcrest & Briarhill but blended with the rustic materials and balanced asymmetry of Redcroft & Fencegate.
56. The breakthrough of the First Church led to further radical developments when Wood was joined by J. Henry Sellers from 1902 onwards. The outcome was a series of unique flat roofed houses, schools and other buildings which pioneered the Moderne or art deco style.

3. BAILLIE SCOTT - A COMPARABLE DESIGNER



Plate 14 Blackwell, near Bowness, Cumbria, Baillie Scott's masterpiece of 1898.
Photo: Tony and Maureen Kemp Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 2.0.

57. It can be useful to cross reference Edgar Wood to another contemporary designer of note, to illuminate similarities, differences and the variety of design paths possible at that time. Mackay Hugh Baillie Scott was especially prominent in the Arts & Crafts Movement, as a writer as well as an architect and all-round designer. However, Scott was principally a designer of houses whereas Wood had a wider oeuvre, but where domestic work dominated. Scott had a long career which ran right into the late 1930s and was especially successful after the First World War.⁶ Edgar Wood, by comparison, wrote very little and retired relatively early in 1922. Like Wood, Scott was internationally important around 1900 and their work was often illustrated together in the same journals.

⁶ There is a useful outline of his career at <http://www.victorianweb.org/art/design/bailliescott/chron.html>

Career Outline

58. Edgar Wood (1860–1935) and Baillie Scott (1865–1945) were therefore close contemporaries, Baillie Scott being 5 years Wood's junior. Diane Haigh in her 1995 work on Baillie Scott gives the period of his independent architectural practice as roughly 1892 to 1940.⁷ He was a late starter, having studied at agricultural college first in the mid 1880's and was therefore too young to have been part of the small group of architects which initially developed art nouveau and vernacular forms.
59. Compared to Wood's Manchester industrial and entrepreneurial upbringing, Baillie Scott was born in Kent, grew up in Sussex, studied at agricultural college in Cirencester and was articled in Bath from 1886 to 1890. However, like Edgar Wood, he was concerned with vernacular forms and materials as a response to the soulless mass production of the Victorian industrial period. He was particularly inspired by the rural building tradition, what he referred to as *old work*. He employed traditional forms and construction throughout his career, and much of his work is in a classic, romantic arts and crafts style. However, he was experimental and a rule-breaker in other ways and his interior ground plans were radical for their time.



Plate 15 White Room Fireplace at [Blackwell](#), near Bowness, Cumbria is mature synthesis of art nouveau and vernacular elements. Photo: Rob Farrow, Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 2.0

60. Unlike Wood, Scott was not especially attracted to art nouveau early in his career though at its height, in the years around 1900, he blended advanced art nouveau forms and colour schemes into the vernacular of his interiors and craftwork, as in the outstanding White Room Fireplace at Blackwell, see Plate 15.

⁷ Diane Haigh, *The Artistic House*, Academy Editions, London 1995

61. During this period, his works are comparable to both Edgar Wood and Charles Rennie Mackintosh with all three using similar styling and motifs, though the open quality of Scott's interior spaces were a defining attribute. However, when Mackintosh and Wood moved towards modernism and art deco, Baillie Scott stayed with the vernacular. Despite their many similarities, the urban cultural underpinning of Wood and Mackintosh seemed eventually to come to the fore, leading them in a different artistic direction to Scott.

Baillie Scott in the North-West

62. Baillie Scott began his architectural practice in 1889 on the Isle of Man, beginning with a home for himself and his family, the Red House in Douglas (1892-3). The Red House is vernacular in design, a half-timbered construction with twin gables, carved barge boards and lintels and mediaeval references inside and out. It was built using the red brick and timber framing typical of the Cheshire farmhouses which were Baillie Scott's early inspiration. The building is quite different to Wood's work of 1891-2, with little of the raw theatre of Redcroft & Fencegate or the art nouveau of Hillcrest & Briarhill. It has similar broad surfaces and traditional construction but a more conservative choice of architectonic forms.

63. His design for the interior was more radical, with the use of internal sliding screens which allowed the main living spaces to be opened up for a more modern and progressive lifestyle. Baillie Scott lived and practiced at the Red House from 1893 until 1901 when commissions drew him south and he moved his offices to Bedford.

64. Baillie Scott's first commissioned work on the mainland was in the north-west, Bexton Croft in Knutsford in 1895. Again, at Bexton Croft, Baillie Scott used visible timber framing, carved barge boards and much of the *old work* which he loved and employed throughout his career. Externally, the overall impression is of a mediaeval farmhouse but internally he is again less conventional. On the ground floor he uses wide openings between the main living spaces, and a galleried landing to connect the upper and lower floors. He pays great attention to artistic detail with designs for painted wall plaster, ceiling bosses, ceramic tiles for the hearths and a scheme for door and window furniture. This unity of design, with every internal fitting designed to the last detail, is a consistent theme in Baillie Scott's work.

65. His later works maintain the vernacular idiom, whereas Edgar Wood pioneered art deco modernism. Good examples of his late vernacular style are found at Church Rate Corner, Cambridge (1924) and 48 Storeys Way, Cambridge (1912).

Blackwell

66. Baillie Scott is now best known for Blackwell (listed Grade I), south of Bowness in Cumbria which is open to visitors, see Plates 14 and 15. It is a mature and brilliant Arts & Crafts design built in 1898-9 for Sir Edward Holt, a north-west industrialist and Lord Mayor of Manchester. The vernacular revival of the exterior is tempered by very plain use of materials. This contrasts with the dramatic interior which is shaped by a lively blend of vernacular and art nouveau decoration and fittings.

67. Externally, the south face is minimal, even austere with rendered walls broken by massive, stone lintelled windows. Internally, Baillie Scott again uses an open plan for the main living area with sliding screens and a minstrels' gallery. He included designs for every decorative element from painted wall paper and stained glass to furniture and fittings. Like much of Baillie Scott's work, it is essentially a romantic scheme but one designed for dramatic effect, for entertaining and for modern living.

Designer, Artist and Writer

68. Baillie Scott was a prolific designer, artist and writer. Like Wood, he had an interest in well-designed suburban housing for the more modest client and in town planning.⁸ He published numerous articles in *The Studio* between 1895 and 1914 and in other journals of the day. In 1906 he published "Houses & Gardens", a manifesto for a new style of housing design. His ideas on rational planning could, he argued, be applied universally, not just to the country house but to a modest cottage by applying an honesty of scale and construction. Diane Haigh highlights the fact that in the late Victorian period, the quality of an architect's education was uncertain.⁹ Like Wood, Baillie Scott came from a wealthy family and was educated to 18 before moving on to agricultural college, whereas Wood went straight into architecture.
69. How well Wood and Baillie Scott knew one another has not been studied. However, with Scott living and working from the Isle of Man from 1893 (the year after Hillcrest & Briarhill were built) until 1901, and with Wood completing numerous commissions during that time across the north-west, Scott and Wood cannot have been unaware of each other. It is extremely likely that they would have been deeply aware of each other's work in the years around 1900, as their work becomes stylistically very close, even suggesting some form of direct communication. In subsequent years, their common interest in garden suburb town planning would also have brought them together.
70. A significant difference between the two designers was that while in his early work, up to around 1908, Scott led progressive architectural trends, his later work broke no new ground, despite running a highly successful practice and producing beautifully crafted buildings. Apart from his brief affair with art nouveau, he never moved far from his original love of *old work* and it was this conservatism that perhaps underpinned his later success in the south of England. Edgar Wood, on the other hand was always a stylistic leader and at the cutting edge. He led the Arts & Crafts Movement towards modernism and art deco, but hardly any of his generation travelled with him. His breakthroughs prior to 1910 had to wait until the 1920s and 30s when a new younger generation of architects ran with them, this after he had retired to Italy.
71. In comparison to Wood, Baillie Scott designed slightly more conservative exteriors but more spatial interiors. He had a gentler eye with regard to form and colour and his art nouveau interiors were a phase rather than an ongoing project. In

⁸ 'The Englishman's Home' in Raymond Unwin et al (1909) *Town Planning & Modern Architecture in Hampstead Garden Suburb, London*

⁹ Haigh 1995 pp9

some ways, Baillie Scott sat between the cutting edge designers like Wood and Mackintosh and the more conservative Arts & Crafts practitioners like Walter Brierley (1862–1926) and Edwin Lutyens (1869 – 1944) who both stayed with traditional forms and avoided art nouveau and its successor art deco.

72. While Scott wrote prolifically in journals and books, Wood was almost silent, simply publishing illustrations or photographs of his work. He had an aversion to any form of self-publicity.
73. It is only in studying Edgar Wood's buildings that we understand his stylistic experiments and his development of art nouveau from its very beginning to its transition into art deco. Apart from Mackintosh, there is no other equivalent architectural record, simply because nobody else in the Arts & Crafts Movement made the enormous journey from late aestheticism to art deco, via art nouveau.

4. HILLCREST & BRIARHILL - NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL PUBLICATION



Plate 16 Original published design watercolour of Hillcrest & Briarhill. From 'the Architect', 20th October 1893. Manchester Libraries, Information and Archives, Manchester City Council

74. The British journal *the Architect* published Edgar Wood's design for Hillcrest & Briarhill on 20th October 1893 (see Plate 16). This original point of publication was only discovered by the Edgar Wood Society in late April 2016.
75. *The American Architect & Building News [International Edition]* subsequently published the same image on 18th November 1893. This Boston-published image was the Edgar Wood Society's initial discovery of publication, found in late 2015. The Society does not have permission to reproduce this Patent Office copy but it is identical to the version in *the Architect* held by Manchester Libraries, save for

the name of the journal on the right hand side of the image. Nb. the page in *the American Architect* includes a typographical error showing 1894.

76. The journals imply the building was fully constructed at the time of publication, which coincides with the deeds being dated 1892. The accompanying text in *the Architect*, and both the US and International versions of *the American Architect*, read as follows:

“The houses shown in the illustration are faced with Ruabon work in brick, bands, sills, etc, the stone being concentrated around the front entrance. The roof is covered with five colours of slates, small size, laid random, and blue ridging. The whole of the interior woodwork including mantels, is yellow-pine treated with transparent paint, which allows the grain to still be seen, and at the same time takes away the rawness of the wood. The upper portions of many of the windows are filled with stained glass, the designs of which are taken from local growth.”¹⁰

77. The recent discovery of these publications is significant for a number of reasons, both historical and historiographical.

Historical Significance

78. In historical terms, the unearthing of the illustration means that the building can be unequivocally attributed to Edgar Wood and confirmed as being built in 1892. It also confirms that Edgar Wood believed in the design and the publishers were sufficiently impressed to arrange its almost simultaneous publication in national and international edition journals which would have reached architectural ateliers and educational institutions across the western world. Thus, one of the leading creative figures of the Arts and Crafts Movement – the most significant and widely influential British art movement in history - had sought to get his new architectural design published far and wide, and had succeeded in doing so.
79. Wood’s design would have been seen by significant young British and European architects as a result of being published in these two journals. On one hand, *the Architect* had been supported during this time by Norman Shaw’s pupils in the guise of the Architectural Illustration Society and has also been noted as a likely favourite of the young C. R. Mackintosh.¹¹ On the other hand, interest in the U.S. Shingle Style undoubtedly cemented the Boston-based journal’s popularity with other contemporaries such as M. H. Baillie Scott and C. F. A. Voysey during the late 1880s and early 1890s.¹²
80. Hermann Muthesius - the most enlightened contemporary commentator on the influence of Britain’s young architects in his seminal *Das Englische Haus* (published 1904/05) - ranked Edgar Wood with Voysey, Henry Wilson and CH Townsend as *moderns* whose work was a

¹⁰ See *the American Architect and Building News*, Vol.42, No.934, p.92. Available to view at: <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=iau.31858055199214;view=1up;seq=578>

¹¹ See David Walker ‘The Glasgow Years’ in Kaplan (ed.) ‘Charles Rennie Mackintosh’ (1996) p.133

¹² See JD Kornwolf, ‘M. H. Baillie Scott and the Arts and Crafts Movement: Pioneers of Modern Design’ (London, 1972)

"second consequence of the connection with the Arts & Crafts: a new vocabulary of forms", and who had "adopted much the same attitude to historical forms as the new movement on the continent, which began by throwing tradition to the winds".

81. This *new movement* was of course art nouveau and Muthesius' most significant claim for the young British *moderns* was that from *"their midst sprang the new vocabulary of forms that so greatly astonished the continent during the first half of the 1890s"*.¹³ This marks precisely when the illustration of Hillcrest & Briarhill appeared in the international press. As noted earlier and detailed in the section on *Experimental Architectonic Forms*, below, Hillcrest & Briarhill had a greater radical edge and a larger number of new forms than most, if not all, of its British equivalents when published in 1893. It was an astonishing design from a continental perspective. Its interest to those following the emergent radicalism in British domestic design - whether they were based at home or in foreign cities such as Brussels, Paris, Darmstadt or Vienna - should therefore not be underestimated or downplayed.

Historiographical Significance

82. The illustration is also highly significant in historiographical terms, i.e. the way in which the histories of Edgar Wood and Arts and Crafts architecture and the place of Middleton have been recorded and analyzed across the last century - that is largely overlooked!
83. Between the late 1950s and the aforementioned first discovery of the building's publication during late 2015, John H. G. Archer (the pioneering historian of Edgar Wood) had been unable to locate Hillcrest & Briarhill in either Middleton's planning records or the late-Victorian architectural press. He had consequently only ever granted the building an undated stylistic attribution to Wood. It caused a *lack-of-protection-due-to-lack-of-proof-and-analysis* scenario throughout the intervening years, especially considering that the building is surrounded by listed buildings within a conservation area, yet remains inexplicably unlisted itself, despite its progressive architectural forms.
84. These forms have been tragically under-explored within an appropriately detailed art-historical context. Throughout John Archer's two most extensive written explorations of Wood's work, a 1964/65- article published by the Lancashire & Cheshire Antiquarian Society (LCAS), and his unpublished MA thesis dated to 1868, his references to the building are extremely brief and offer little by way of actual architectural analysis. In both extracts, the materials used rather than the architectural forms employed by Wood are the only aspect Archer chooses to comment upon. The bulk of the longer extract (from the LCAS), simply reads:

"The design consists of a pair of semi-detached houses of considerable size and built in extremely harsh materials, lobster red stock engineering type bricks and

¹³ H. Muthesius, 'The English House' [1904 / Abridged English translation, Ed. Dennis Sharp, London, 1979], p.41

*terra-cotta. Their use was never repeated by Wood. One house contains attractive stained glass in the top section of the upper sashes of the windows*¹⁴

85. This lack of detail stemmed partly from the limited space of a relatively short overview. However, Archer would have also underestimated the artistic importance of the design being under the mistaken assumption that Wood and national and international publishers had never sought to promote its existence. The fact that the houses' names Hillcrest & Briarhill have only recently been rediscovered and placed back into descriptive usage (being, as they are, the names by which no.37 & no.39 Rochdale Road are listed in turn-of-the-century census records), provides further evidence that until now, the building has only ever been granted a cursory level of architectural consideration. In short, the semi-detached houses Hillcrest & Briarhill have been intellectually neglected.
86. In terms of cause and effect, it must therefore be considered that, with no full and proper analysis of Hillcrest & Briarhill having been penned, the building's cultural value and conservation status must surely have been overlooked and underestimated for the many decades previous.
87. The *Architect/American Architect* drawing should be considered a game-changing discovery. It proves that the Hillcrest & Briarhill commission was not a poorly-recorded, minor or throw-away local job, but a building that should be granted the same level of architectural consideration and status as has long been granted to various other key transitional works by Wood's second wave Arts & Crafts peers.

5. A UNIQUE ART NOUVEAU TOWN BUILDING

88. Hillcrest & Briarhill comprise a highly significant design with a great historical resonance. This section seeks to tease out the various strands and nuances of architectural history that impacted upon its design.

Edgar Wood's Art Nouveau Affiliations

89. The close proximity of Edgar Wood's design themes to those of his most progressive direct peers (born 1850-1870) should not be underestimated, particularly during the early 1890s when a significant and intriguing search for form was much in evidence between them.

*"Free design meant that both form and materials could be used in new, experimental balances...Design freedom also meant individual interpretation of shared principles."*¹⁵

90. For one thing, the design lineage that academics have traced from Godwin to the younger London-based Scottish architect James Maclaren appears to have caught

¹⁴ JHG Archer, 'Edgar Wood: A Notable Manchester Architect', *Trans Lancs & Cheshire Ant Soc* 73-74 (1963-4), p.167

¹⁵ Elizabeth Cumming and Wendy Kayplan, 'The Arts and Crafts Movement', *Thames & Hudson, World of Art*, (1991), p.42

Wood's attention in much the same way it influenced Charles Rennie Mackintosh.

16

91. Perhaps the closest precursor to Wood's attractive flanking of the Hillcrest & Briarhill bow windows with their attenuated pilasters (Fig.2), is Maclaren's work at nos.10 and 12 Palace Court, Bayswater, London (Fig.1; 1889-90, listed Grade II*).¹⁷ As part of 'a *complex balanced asymmetrical street frontage, full of boundless invention in detail*'.¹⁸ Maclaren's use of polychromatic banding at the higher levels and sculpted foliage in the lower vicinities of the entrances is echoed at Hillcrest & Briarhill, although the decorative effect created by Wood's brick and terracotta work is more subtle by comparison due to a late change in materials (discussed in *William Morris - Building Materials Lecture*, below).
92. Should any doubts remain about Wood's likely awareness of Maclaren's Palace Court design, they can surely be removed by his similarly skilful (not to mention playful) compositional handling of the neighbouring Redcroft & Fencegate (Fig.3, listed Grade II). In both Bayswater and Middleton, the architects present a cleverly disguised '*pair of houses blended into one composition*'¹⁹ to give off the impression of a single, stand-alone property. One is urban, the other rural in styling but both are an *individual interpretation of shared principles*.



Fig.1 Source: 'Die Englische Baukunst der Gegenwart' by H. Muthesius (1900-01) [EWS]



Fig.2 (top) Source: Middleton Local Studies [EWS]
Fig.3 (bm) Source: Moderne Bauformen 6 (1907) [EWS]

¹⁶ David Walker, 'The Glasgow Years' in Kaplan (ed.) Charles Rennie Mackintosh (1996) p.133-134.

¹⁷ Similar flanking of bay windows is also evident the work of Philip Webb, though Webb's work was all-but unpublished and it is impossible to say if Wood might have seen buildings such as Webb's Vicarage at Brampton, Cumbria (1877).

¹⁸ Alistair Service, 'James Maclaren and the Godwin Legacy' in A.Service (ed.) Edwardian Architecture and its Origins' (1975) p.113.

¹⁹ Ibid. p.112

93. Broadly speaking, Wood's overall design for Hillcrest & Briarhill seems intent upon overhauling, adapting and modernising the aesthetics of the London townhouse idiom, as expressed by nos.10 and 12 Palace Court, Bayswater (Fig 1). The result is a uniquely northern post-Queen Anne evolution of the aforementioned 1880s residences found across Chelsea and Kensington. However, it is ultimately Wood's handling of the building's art nouveau detailing that truly unites it with the work of his direct British contemporaries.
94. Writing at the very outset of the twentieth century, the famous German diplomat and author of *'Das Englische Haus'* Hermann Muthesius elaborated upon the lineage of young British designers who had built upon their admiration for J. D. Sedding to forge something of a 'series' as the 1890s progressed. All of these men have since been labelled as art nouveau in one historical analysis or another:

*"C. H. Townsend must be named its most outspoken representative... next to Townsend, Voysey is the prophet of the new language of form, which is expressed above all in the construction of domestic dwellings. The genesis of this totally Modern group of architects must be traced back to Sedding, a figure to whom will one day be conceded an extraordinary significance in the development of Modern English art. Sedding's follower and student, H[enry] Wilson, is indisputably one of the most original. Other figures in the series... younger men to be named are Edgar Wood, Mackintosh, and Baillie Scott on the Isle of Man."*²⁰

95. Wood's other early 1890s undertakings demonstrate significantly close organic correlations to the work of these *totally Modern* associates (Nb. only some of whom were in full practice by 1892; Mackintosh was yet to properly emerge and Baillie Scott was just starting out).
96. Wood's Manchester and Salford Bank, Middleton (Fig.4, listed Grade II) is similarly faced with buff terracotta, or faience as C. H. Townsend's Bishopsgate Institute (Fig.5, listed Grade II*), with both buildings dated to 1892. In addition, the tree-like forms moulded into Townsend's frontage are matched in their New Art lavishness by the whiplash bracketed rainwater hoppers and the foliated archway that adorn Wood's bank. The very next year Wood and Townsend designed extraordinarily similar Chapel designs, though Townsend's was apparently not executed until 1901.²¹ Despite the physical distance between the two - Wood's Wesleyan Chapel being located at Silver Street, Rochdale (see Fig.6, listed Grade II); Townsend's Congregational Chapel at Blackheath, Surrey (see Fig.7, unlisted with additions) - the designs are comparable in their compact size, layout and simplicity of form. Both also utilise Voysey-style sloping buttresses to provide architectural accents.

²⁰ Hermann Muthesius, 'Die Englische Baukunst der Gegenwart', (1900-01), pp. 30-31 (translated extract taken from James Kornwolf, 'Baillie Scott and the Arts and Crafts Movement' (1972) – Chapter III 'Bedford and the Move To London' – footnote 116).

²¹ Wood's design was published in the *British Architect*, 27th Oct 1893. For Townsend's, see A Service, 'Charles Harrison Townsend' in Service (ed.) 'Edwardian Architecture and its Origins' (1975) + Jacqueline Banerjee and Sarah Sullivan, 'Blackheath Village, Surrey: Charles Harrison Townsend and the Garden Suburb Movement' at: <http://www.victorianweb.org/art/architecture/townsend/4.html>

This was a feature that was still extremely rare in 1893, although it would go on to become perhaps the most pervasive of all British New Art motifs.

97. Continuing to call upon Wood's early 1890s oeuvre to explore his avant-garde connections and credentials, it is arguable that the Tree of Life design which adorns the front gable and entrance of the Silver Street Chapel (see Fig.8) could have taken inspiration from Henry Wilson's largely-unrealised yet hugely influential design for the Ladbroke Grove Free Library (1890-91, see Fig.10, listed Grade II).²² In Fig.9 a similar stained glass design for the 1892 Old Road Unitarian Chapel is now unfortunately destroyed. Additional inspiration could perhaps have come from stained glass work created by Shrigley and Hunt in conjunction with Mackmurdo's Century Guild at nearby Pownall Hall, Wilmslow (c.1833, with relevant interiors 1886-90, listed Grade II*²³). This is an acknowledged point of influence that must be further elaborated upon with regard to Edgar Wood's art nouveau.²⁴
98. A magnificent Sideboard (Fig.11, extant) was designed by Wood c.1890-93 the same period in which he created Hillcrest & Briarhill. It was for Halecroft, a house Wood designed in 1890 (listed Grade II*) and it perfectly encapsulates his pursuit of an organic approach - similar to that of both Wilson and Mackmurdo.



Fig.4 Photo: Nick Baker

Fig.5 Photo: Partage Plus/Collections Trust
(CC Attribution 3.0 Unported Licence)

²² Published in the Architect on 20th June 1890 and the American Architect and Building News on 12th July 1890. The proposed design (largely unexecuted) is widely suggested to have influenced CR Mackintosh's student Soane Medallion designs (1893) and CH Townsend's Bishopsgate Institute (1892). See Cyndy Manton 'Henry Wilson: Practical Idealist' (Cambridge, 2009), p13-15.

²³ Specifically a window showing St George on horseback beneath a 'Tree of Life' in the West wing of the house. It is notable also that the Century Guild's 'Hobby Horse' periodical featured a 'Tree of Life' penned by Selwyn Image on its cover (see Archer, 1988, below).

²⁴ Mackmurdo and the Century Guild's influence upon Wood and Mackintosh, as well as C. F. A. Voysey, has been convincingly evidenced. See John Archer 'Edgar Wood and Mackintosh' in P.Nuttgens (ed.) 'Mackintosh and His Contemporaries in Europe and America' (1988).



Fig.6 Photo: Nick Baker

Fig.7 Photo: Nick Baker



Fig.8 (Left) Photo: David Morris

Fig.9 (Centre) Source: 'Edgar Wood' by TR Davison, in *Architecture Vol.2* (1897) [Sourced by EWS]

Fig.10 (Right) Source: *The Architect* (1890) [Sourced by EWS]

99. The finely carved upper panel of the sideboard again nods towards Wilson's work at Ladbrooke Grove. Fig.12 shows Wilson's fireplace for the Library as displayed by the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society in 1890. Wood's sideboard has more of an Arts & Crafts approach, as his briars display the material characteristics of carved wood, whereas Wilson's work is softer and closer to the graphical origins of art nouveau.

100. Wood's swirling, carved-out drawers are similarly reminiscent of a Mackmurdo-designed Side Table that is believed to have been created for Pownall Hall, and which was exhibited in at least one of the Century Guild's set-piece exhibition displays during the mid-1880s.²⁵

²⁵ See: <http://www.artic.edu/aic/collections/artwork/158982>. Information on the table's provenance supplied via a talk (Manchester Victorian Society on 5/4/2016) and Nick Baker's correspondence with Stuart Evans, the leading expert on AH Mackmurdo and the Century Guild.

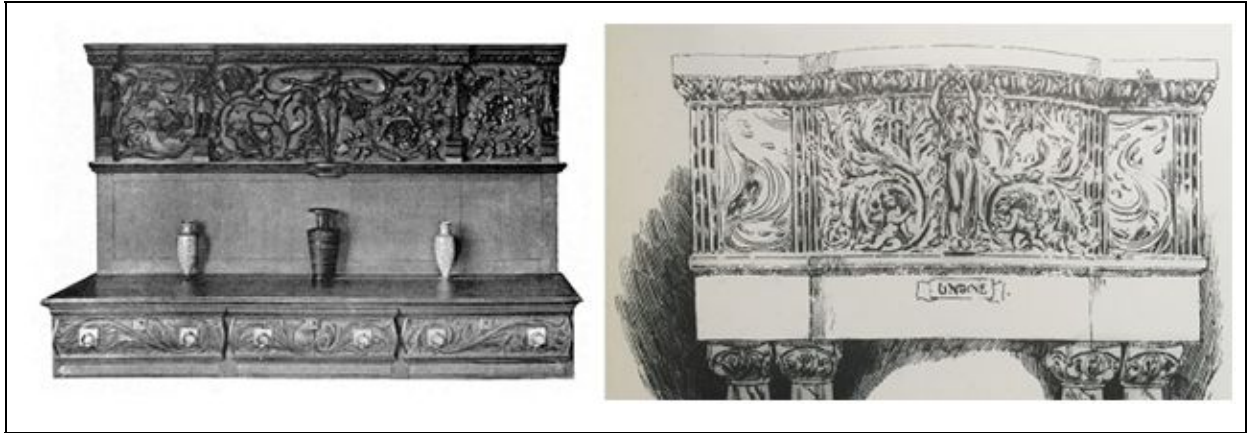


Fig.11 Source: Dekorative Kunst (1899) [EWS]

Fig.12 Source: The Architect (1890) [EWS]

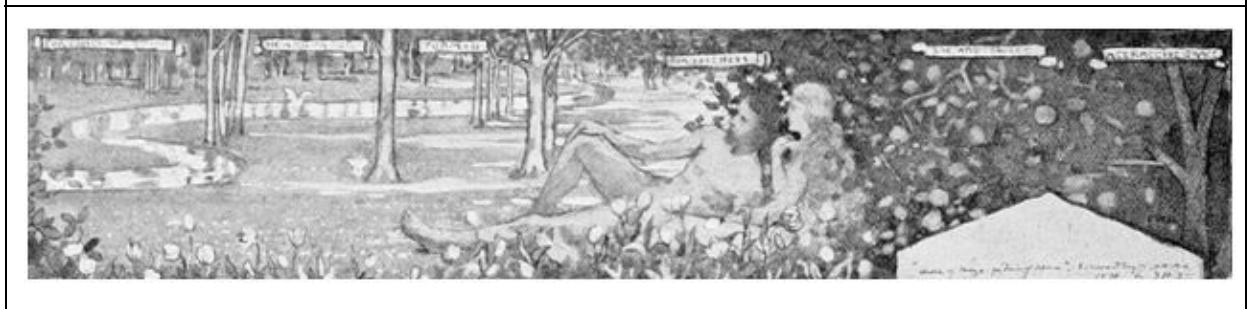


Fig.13 Source: The Studio (Sept 1898) [EWS]

101. It is notable that Halecroft and Pownall Hall are located on the same stretch of Cheshire road linking Hale and Wilmslow, with only five and a half miles between them. It is thus conceivable Wood may have accessed and studied the Century Guild's interior schemes. A final point of interest, highly supportive of this possibility, is a frieze painted at Wood's own house Redcroft by his close friend Frederick W. Jackson (Fig.13, c.1891-92, untraced). This scheme, known only by a photograph and the sketch illustrated above, shows figures reclining within a wooded valley landscape, and is annotated with lines from Milton's *Paradise Lost*.²⁶ In its Nature-driven New Art themes and execution, the frieze bears a remarkable likeness to one by the Century Guild's Selwyn Image at Pownall Hall. The similar band of landscape which Image painted is said to depict the local Bollin Valley, and is now found separated into sections at the William Morris Gallery, London.²⁷

²⁶ Jackson's sketch featured in the Northern Art Workers Guild's first exhibition and was illustrated in the Studio Vol.XIV, no.66, Sept 1898, p.286. Its location at Redcroft was confirmed via comparisons to the single photograph (a high quality print of which resides at Middleton Library. See 'Partnership in Style: Edgar Wood and J.Henry Sellers', 1975, p.33 / B33 for a published version).

²⁷ Some but not all of the sections can be viewed on the Art UK web archive: <http://artuk.org/discover/artists/image-selwyn-18491930>



Fig.14 Source: Middleton Local Studies [EWS]

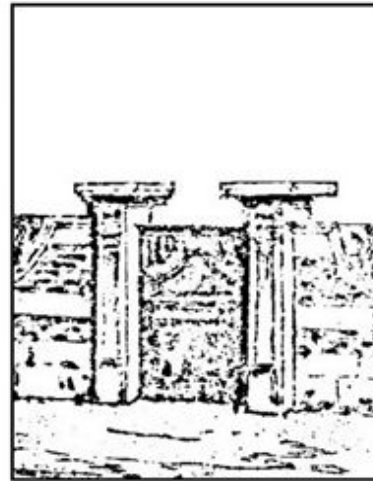


Fig.15 Source: The British Architect (1886) [EWS] Fig.16 Source: The Architect (1890) [EWS]

102. Ultimately, Edgar Wood's vitally important art nouveau affiliations did make their avant-garde presence felt upon the domestic exteriors at Rochdale Road - particularly around the entranceways and windows of Hillcrest & Briarhill.

103. The upper portions of Briarhill's windows contained a fresh 'organic' adaption of art nouveau - furthering the Wilsonian Tree of Life motif - sinuous leadwork and stained glass formations (Fig. 14, now lost; see *Restoration of Stained Glass* below).



Fig.17 Source: Middleton Local Studies [EWS]

Fig.18 Photo: David Morris



Fig.19 Source: Steve Cadman / Fig.20 Source: Steve Cadman / Fig.21 Source: Steve Cadman
(All three Images: Creative Commons Attribution Share Alike 2.0 Generic Licence)

104. The impact of Mackmurdo is keenly felt around the entranceways of Hillcrest & Briarhill, particularly in Wood's original design for the gateways to Rochdale Road (Fig.16). Here can be found a variation of Mackmurdo's iconic *mortar board capitals* which were published as part of the Century Guild's *Copes Cabin* at the 1886 Liverpool Exhibition (Fig.15, untraced).²⁸ They show Wood pursuing a motif now synonymous with Charles Rennie Mackintosh. In fact it was used well in advance of the world-famous Glaswegian, further underlining the avant-garde credentials of Edgar Wood. The pillars, however, were amended when constructed.

²⁸ For example in the *British Architect* on July 30th 1886 (seen in Fig.15)

105. The final and most original point of art nouveau interest is Briarhill's largely intact original front doorway (which was originally replicated at Hillcrest). This entrance, with its decorative floral glazing foliated stonework keystone and the curvilinear handling of the door itself, is a hugely significant feature (Figs.17 and 18). Nb. the white square tiles are modern. As yet, no direct British precedents for it have been traced. Moreover, it provides an important indicator that fledgling Franco-Belgian art nouveau design was not in advance of organic British design developments around 1892-93; certainly in terms of how exterior design features, such as doors and windows, were being handled.
106. Within the European context, UNESCO is justified in classifying Victor Horta's 1893 Hotel Tassel, Brussels (Plate 6 and Fig.19) as one of, if not the key originator of canonically-sanctioned continental art nouveau, especially considering its innovative planning and truly anti-rationalist interior. However, a lack of radical, anti-historicist embellishment on the Tassel's doors is noteworthy compared to some of Horta's later buildings such as his Hotel Solvay (Fig.20; 1898) and Studio-house of Fernand Dubois (Fig.21; 1904) which bear considerable resemblance to Briarhill. It is also worth noting the similarity of the curved bow windows on Hotel Tassel and Hillcrest & Briarhill with their attenuated pilasters. It is thus arguable that, during this early stage in art nouveau's development, the confidence to add radical, dynamic, nature-inspired forms to the exteriors of buildings was perhaps still in the process of being imported from at least one radical young British *Modern*, Edgar Wood, about whom Muthesius would later enthuse.



Fig.22 Photo: David Morris



Fig.23 Photos: David Morris



Fig.24 Source: HTNW



Fig.25 Credit: Gerald Blaikie



Fig.26 Source: Partage Plus/Collections Trust (CC Att/Unported 3.0)

107. In a British context, it should finally be suggested that without the influential home-grown New Art aesthetics in which Edgar Wood is shown to have been central player; without the dynamic forms proposed for Henry Wilson's Ladbroke Grove Library, without Mackmurdo's startlingly florid interiors and furniture, without C. H. Townsend's stylistically uncategorizable Bishopsgate Institute... and perhaps also without the unorthodox forms employed by Edgar Wood in creations such as the Briarhill doorway and bow windows... there might never have been the similar brand of art nouveau delivered by the yet-to-emerge Charles Rennie Mackintosh of Glasgow.
108. If you compare additional features found at both of Wood's early Rochdale Road designs (c.1891-93) to those found in Mackintosh's initial mid-1890's projects such as Martyrs Public School (Fig.25; 1894-95, listed Cat A) and the initial phase of his masterpiece Glasgow School of Art (Fig.26; 1896-98, listed Cat A), some legitimate questions are posed concerning the direction in which evolutionary ideas might conceivably have flowed. As well as Briarhill's front door, two fascinating examples are the interior glazing of Redcroft's attic doors (Fig.23) and the carved Glasgow Style lettering featured on the nameplate of Wood's Redcroft gatepost (Fig.24, destroyed).
109. If the notion of Muthesius', evolutionary *series* of *totally Modern* designers – namely Sedding, Townsend, Voysey, Wilson, Wood, Mackintosh, and Baillie Scott – is given the respect that it deserves, then it naturally follows that the New Art design work of Edgar Wood should be afforded the same level of individual significance and heritage status that has already been granted to virtually all the architectural work of these celebrated contemporaries. Hillcrest & Briarhill thus represent a key element in the evolution of British art nouveau.

Precedent for Edgar Wood's Mature Art Nouveau Synthesis

110. It has been noted by several respected architectural historians that Edgar Wood's turn-of-the-century masterworks were significantly laced with art nouveau characteristics. The key executed works most often drawn upon to exemplify this are his Long Street Methodist Church & Schools (1899-1902, listed Grade II*), Lindley Clock Tower (1902, listed Grade II*), Banney Royd house (1900-1902, listed Grade I) and the First Church of Christ Scientist (1903-1909, listed Grade I), see Plate 13.
111. What has long been absent from critical architectural analysis, however, is a fuller recognition and understanding of vital architectural precedents for these superlative buildings within Wood's own earlier undertakings, in particular the period before 1894 which includes Hillcrest & Briarhill.
112. The mature, turn-of-the-century design work of Arts & Crafts architects such as William Lethaby, E. S. Prior and Ernest Gimson exudes an earthy - at times almost savage - commitment to reinterpreting vernacular traditions. On the other hand, the immaculate rendered houses of C. F. A. Voysey and M. H. Baillie Scott offered up occasional flourishes vaguely reminiscent of continental art nouveau (particularly in Scott's interiors and Voysey's furnishings). However, Edgar Wood's most significant contribution to the development of British Arts & Crafts architecture during its golden decade (1895-1905) was his masterful ability to

combine fundamental aspects of vernacular building with more organic, upward - and arguably more ambitious - design themes that could be interpreted as New Art or art nouveau.

113. In contrast to the *limiting* influence of Nature within C. F. A. Voysey's approach to building, as perceived by the late historian and architect Robert Macleod, Nature was deemed to have had the reverse effect on Edgar Wood's architecture. It was instead used as a stimulant towards more radical form-finding. This is a significant theoretical precondition to any serious analysis of Edgar Wood's architectural development:

*"Most of them [Voysey's contemporaries], indeed, were insistent on finding in Nature not the quiet self-effacing set of guiding principles that satisfied Voysey, but a much more dynamic, visually symbolic vocabulary, that could - directly or indirectly - form the basis for a new style. Not surprisingly, what emerged were a whole series of highly personalized styles with many common ingredients - styles which varied from the quixotic 'vernacular building' of Edward Prior through the restrained rationalism of Lethaby to the so-called 'Art Nouveau' of such great provincials as Edgar Wood of Manchester and Charles Rennie Mackintosh of Glasgow. And it is important to note that even the superficially Art Nouveau forms used in their, and others', buildings of this time, owed much more to Arts and Crafts precedent than to Continental developments."*²⁹

A Vital Pairing

114. In many respects the contrasting but complimentary designs for Recroft & Fencegate and Hillcrest & Briarhill mark a clear separation between emergent vernacular considerations, as seen in the half-rendered Redcroft & Fencegate, (see Figs. 3 and 27), and more upright and experimental New Art considerations presented by the brick and terracotta-faced Hillcrest & Briarhill (see Figs. 2 and 28).



Fig 27 Photo: David Morris



Fig. 28 Photo: David Morris

²⁹ Robert Macleod, 'Style & Society: Architectural Ideology in Britain 1835-1914' (London, RIBA, 1971) p.114.

115. Contrasting themes yet, in the doorway designs, these are cleverly and playfully complimentary. The very public front door to the vernacular-themed Fencegate (Fig. 27) is remarkably similar to the hidden servants side-door of the New Art, red-brick Briarhill (Fig.28). However, the asymmetrical Redcroft & Fencegate have a symmetrical doorway while the symmetrical Hillcrest & Briarhill sport an asymmetrical design. The materials of the arch and the shape of the door light are also both cleverly reversed, with the softer art nouveau forms going to Briarhill. The doorway positions also help to contrast one building's restful themes with the other's organic and upright ones. Fencegate's doorway is located beneath a lengthy horizontal string course while Briarhill's is beneath a tall vertical stairwell.
116. These aspects emphasise the near-simultaneous creation of the buildings in 1891-92 and their specific *unity in contrast* formulation with regard to rural/urban, symmetry/asymmetry and form/materials.
117. By clearly separating out the two different approaches in these juxtaposed and equally vital residences, Wood set himself an artistic target to develop and synthesise their themes throughout the remaining years of the 19th Century. Between 1899 and 1902, this challenge would culminate in the completion of nearby Long Street Methodist Church and Schools, where Wood's low-set vernacular Schools buildings are skilfully played-off against the upward trajectory of the Church itself. The success of the Long Street commission lies in Wood's masterful ability to maintain a strong sense of architectural harmony despite the contrasts.
118. It is essential that these two pairs of neighbouring semis should not be overlooked or undervalued within the context of Middleton, or indeed upon a national or international level. In order to support the claim to their importance as a vital pairing, the architectural context into which Wood built the two sets of houses is analysed below in relation to influences and the work of his older peers.

33-39 Rochdale Road - High Art Antecedents

119. The placement of Edgar Wood's buildings within his career progression should always be considered in relation to his radically artistic personality. This streak can be traced back to his first ten years in independent practice between 1884 and 1894 – just so long as the timing and the variety of his youthful architectural influences are taken into account sensibly, in light of the evidence available.

Antecedents of Redcroft & Fencegate

120. It is firstly notable that during the late-1880s and early 1890s, Edgar Wood unquestionably admired the work of Richard Norman Shaw in much the same way as did C. F. A. Voysey and Shaw's own students W. R. Lethaby, E. S. Prior and Ernest Newton. This claim is amply supported by the Shavian forms Wood employed at Westdene, Archer Park (1889 unlisted), Old Road Unitarian Chapel (1892 destroyed), and the Manchester & Salford Bank, Market Place (1892 listed

Grade II).³⁰ Further confirmation of Wood's admiration of Shaw can be found an open letter penned to the *British Architect* in 1901, where Wood placed Shaw first upon his own ideal shortlist of architects with regard to the famous Liverpool Anglican Cathedral competition.³¹

121. In light of Wood's admiration, the collection of radical domestic work carried out by Shaw, his student Edward J. May and (to a smaller extent and earlier) Edward W. Godwin, on London's Bedford Park estate during the 1880s appears to have provided Wood with some inspiration for his ambitious semi-detached pairing of Redcroft & Fencegate.



Fig.29 Source: Steve Cadman (CC Attribution Sharealike 2.0 Generic Licence)



Fig.30 Photo: Geoffrey Grime



Fig.31 Photo: Steve Cadman (CC Attribution Sharealike 2.0 Generic Licence)



Fig.32 Photo: Nick Baker

³⁰ Though all are very much Wood designs and laced with his own innovations, 'Westdene' does echo the facade of Shaw's Studio House for Kate Greenaway at Frognall (1885), the Old Road Unitarian Chapel interior nods towards Shaw's Holy Trinity at Latimer Road (1887-89) and the Manchester & Salford Bank bears an interesting resemblance to the coach house section of Shaw's Leyes Wood (1868). In all three cases, Wood pursues entirely different treatments in terms of planning, materials and detailing, thus creating overall effects that indicate a desire to evolve from the 'Shavian' brand of 'Old English' design.

³¹ Edgar Wood, 'Friends in Council no.101 – The Design of the Liverpool Cathedral' (Open Letter), in *the British Architect*, 23rd August 1901.



Fig.33 Source: The Building News (1876)
[Image sourced by the EWS]

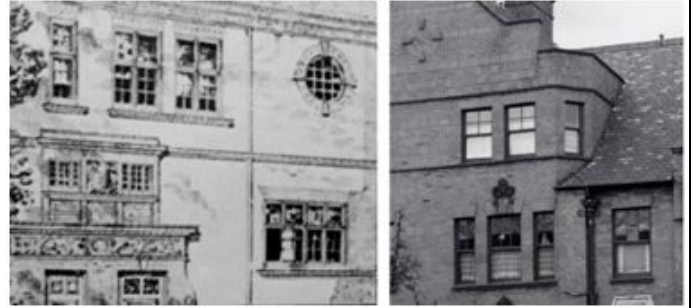


Fig.34 (Left) Source: The British Architect (1880) [EWS]
Fig.35 (Right) Source: Middleton Local Studies [EWS]

122. That a young architect practicing in a Lancashire Cotton town like Middleton was even aware of Bedford Park should be deemed an extraordinary circumstance, and marks Wood out as man with strong aspirations towards the front lines of domestic architecture. And yet, as John Archer has emphasised in his 1968 thesis on Edgar Wood, here was also a man keen to adapt and evolve the most avant garde forms and theory to the urban-industrial context and vernacular traditions of his native county.
123. If one pauses to admire the visual play of horizontal and vertical reds and whites on display in Redcroft & Fencegate (Fig.30), and perhaps the detailing around the front entrance of Fencegate (Fig.32), it becomes easier to envisage Wood having scoured the streets of Bedford Park for at least some of the artistic inspiration that fuelled the creation of this pair of semis. He perhaps paid particular attention to houses such as Edward J. May's 15-25 Queen Anne's Grove (Fig. 29 and 31, c.1882, listed Grade II), and perhaps also to the prophetic stripped back vernacular and canted-bay windows of the earliest houses on the estate, erected by E. W. Godwin around 1876 (Fig.33, Nb. these houses are located at The Avenue/Bedford Road, Ealing, listed Grade II).
124. The Redcroft & Fencegate design represents an advanced essay in vernacular form-finding that occupied half of the young Wood's architectural thinking by the early 1890s. Indeed, the building renders him, alongside Voysey (with Baillie Scott not yet building houses) a true pioneer of the white-rendered cottage idiom that would rapidly come to dominate the streets of the new Garden Suburbs and Garden Cities at the outset of the twentieth century. In short, here was an early prototype for the typical Edwardian Arts and Crafts house.

Antecedents of Hillcrest & Briarhill

125. Next door, the pairing of Hillcrest & Briarhill represent the other half of Wood's architectural thinking of precisely the same period. Here, he feeds an apparent urge to build skywards in a vigorous emulation of Nature, calling upon several experimental Victorian precedents, the result being a tall & powerful building that is fascinatingly singular in its combination of architectural forms.
126. The influence of R. N. Shaw can again be called into consideration, although it is far less clear-cut or pervasive in regard to Hillcrest & Briarhill. What Wood does borrow in this instance, is the sense of sky-scraping, red-bricked, massiveness

found in Shaw's 'Queen Anne' style London townhouses. Dating from roughly the same time as Bedford Park, the finest individual example has sometimes been cited as Shaw's 180 Queen's Gate Kensington (built 1883, destroyed).³²

127. Wood's other inspirations for Hillcrest & Briarhill are arguably more avant-garde still. Leading up to 1885, when the 25-year-old Wood was starting out in independent practice, notable themes in progressive architectural design, less rooted in the vernacular interests of Shaw, had been exemplified by the likes of E. W. Godwin, William Burges and J. D. Sedding. The particular ways in which these Morris and Ruskin-inspired men, and others such as Philip Webb, broke away from Victorian architectural conventions, helped ensure the subsequent *golden generation* of Edwardian Arts and Crafts designers forged far more than just another stylistic revival.

128. Taking direct inspiration from nature, these men were total designers rather than simply architects, and their highly artistic approaches provided the invaluable inspiration for the truly expressive New Art buildings created by British artist-architects born between 1850 and 1870. As the historian Stefan Muthesius (grand-nephew of Hermann) explains in relation to William Burges' legacy:

*"A development of great consequence was the notion that there was a division between a 'professional' architect and an 'art-architect', a term which Burges actually used in 1864. [...] Later in the nineteenth century the 'artist-architect' point of view was linked with an 'arty-crafty' view of honesty in construction, which was in fact a preference for vernacular methods of construction."*³³

129. A powerful indicator of Edgar Wood's progressive mindset as an emergent artist-architect is that such idiosyncratic Victorian forbears had not escaped his attention. This is evidenced by a full profile of Wood's work by T. R. Davison published in 1897 where, rather than listing the vernacular-infused likes of Shaw, Eden Nesfield and George Devey as being the key influences of his youth, we instead discover how...

*"...a careful study and appreciation of the work of contemporary architects such as Burgess, Godwin and Sedding has been one real factor in his education. [...] So we find in his work the influence of Burgess and Sedding just as we can of the trees and flowers. And that leads us to note by what diligent and loving study of plants and flowers Mr Wood has added refinement to his Art and obtained all sorts of delightful motif for his design"*³⁴

130. T. R. Davison's recognition of Wood's early infusion of Nature to his design work is particularly significant in regard to the glazing of Hillcrest & Briarhill, however so too is the idea of Wood having taken youthful inspiration from Burgess, Godwin and Sedding.

³² Nikolaus Pevsner 'Richard Norman Shaw' in A. Service (ed.), *Edwardian Architecture and its Origins* (London, 1975) p.50.

³³ Stefan Muthesius 'The High Victorian Movement in Architecture: 1850-1870' pp.157-159

³⁴ Thomas Raffles Davison, 'Edgar Wood' in *Architecture* Vol.2 [1897, Periodical], p.100.

131. The most evident physical traces of these influences at Hillcrest & Briarhill stem from Godwin's part-executed row of artists' houses at Tite Street, Chelsea (designed c.1877-80). These designs are noted by Godwin's biographers to have particularly captured the imagination of younger designers after 1890 and Edgar Wood appears to have been no exception.³⁵ The value of seeing their influence placed into the streets of a northern cotton town should not be taken lightly from an art historical or a conservationist point of view.
132. From no.29 Tite Street (built 1879-80 by Godwin for himself, destroyed), Wood appears to have drawn inspiration for his centralised brick roundel, the handling of his brick lintels and the spacing of various windows at Hillcrest & Briarhill – motifs which were never repeated again elsewhere (see Fig.34 / Fig.35). More comparable still is the overall form of Godwin's unbuilt design for no.33 Tite Street (Fig. 36 and 37, designed in 1879) to that of Wood's towering central portion of Hillcrest & Briarhill where the semi is united beneath the prominent expanse of gable and aforementioned roundel. Both architects' designs feature neatly pronounced sets of horizontal banding, and a protruding, turreted, tower-like section which drives upwards and draws the eye with it. In Godwin's case this is topped off with a canopy, in Wood's original design, with a proto-nouveau finial.



Fig.36 (Left) Source: The British Architect (1880) [Image sourced by EWS]
 Fig.37 (Right) Source: Middleton Local Studies [Image sourced by EWS]

³⁵ See Dudley Harbron 'Edward Godwin', H.Montgomery Hyde 'Oscar Wilde and his Architect, Edward Godwin', and A Service 'James Maclaren and the Godwin Legacy' and in A.Service (ed.), *Edwardian Architecture and its Origins* (London, 1975)

National Collection of Pioneering Art Nouveau Architecture

133. During the early 1890s all the key artist-architects produced experimental works at odds with the vernacular revival to which they would make major contributions from 1895 onwards. This applied to the Shavian school of Shaw's pupils as well as the avant garde group based around Wood, Townsend and Wilson.
134. These buildings – virtually all of them carried out in red stock brick with a distinctly urban character – were preoccupied with the pursuit of fresh architectural forms with which to supersede the fashionable Queen Anne revival town houses and institutions of the 1880s.
135. Tragically, some key examples of this extremely limited set of designs were demolished during the twentieth century, whereas others were not executed, or were done so in a manner their designers had not originally intended. These factors constitute a significant loss in terms of fully understanding the development of this hugely influential generation of architects. Yet their loss also emphasises the importance of retaining the last remaining examples, such as Hillcrest & Briarhill, symbolic as they are of an important and fascinating crossroads in British architectural history.



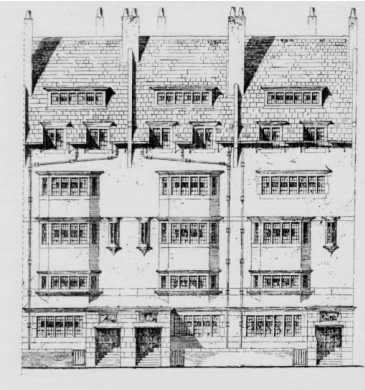
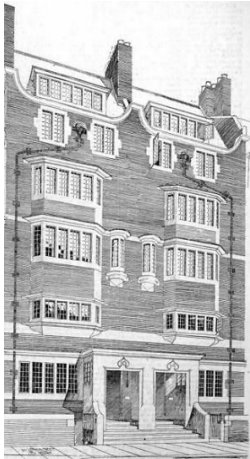


Plate 17 1892 Inglewood, Leicester: A rare work by Ernest Gimson who worked alongside Henry Wilson in Sedding's office. Photo: NotFromUtrecht, Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0

136. Many were stand-alone designs that superficial analysis might mistakenly write-off as developmental dead ends, however they actually mark a vital period where agitated young creatives were full of new ideas – some shared - for a new architecture. The need to fully reconcile such ideas within a single building was not what they were necessarily aiming at, and it certainly should not be the key factor by which their historical significance is determined! Their value ultimately lies in the sense of *fin de siècle* rebelliousness with which they clearly challenged the Victorian architectural status quo.

137. The semi-detached Hillcrest & Briarhill are part of this transitional set of buildings. It can be seen from the following list, that the nearest surviving equivalent is the townhouse pair, 14 and 16 Hans Road, London, by C. F. A. Voysey.

138. Voysey's original rendered rural-style design was modified in the direction of Wood's when implemented, including the use of stock brick and a parapet reminiscent of Wood's front wall. It also lost its third house, through a quarrel with the developer, thereby emphasising the symmetry of the pair in the manner of Wood's design. Nb. the third house was instead designed by Mackmurdo.

Townhouses

			
<p>Fig.38 Source: See text below</p>	<p>Fig.39 Source: See text</p>	<p>Fig.40 Source: See text</p>	<p>Fig.41 Source: See text</p>

C. F. A. Voysey – 14 and 16 Hans Road, London

(1891-92; Figs.38 & 39)

[Fig.38: From the British Architect 18/03/1892. Fig.39: From the Builder 19/09/1896]

[Images sourced by the Edgar Wood Society (EWS)]

Status: Extant & listed Grade II. However, only two thirds of the original design was executed.

A. H. Mackmurdo – 12 Hans Road, London

(1894; Fig.40)

[Image: From the Builder, 29/08/1896 - Sourced by the Edgar Wood Society (EWS)]

Status: Extant and listed Grade II (in conjunction with Voysey's 14 & 16).

CR Ashbee – The Ancient Magpie and Stump, Cheyne Walk, London (destroyed)

(1894; Fig.41)

[Image: From Neubauten in London (Wasmuth/Berlin, 1900) - Sourced by the EWS]




Status: Destroyed.

Edgar Wood – Hillcrest & Briarhill

(1892)

Status: Extant, with some loss of detail, unlisted.

Detached Villas

		
Fig.42 Source: See text below	Fig.43 Source: See text below	Fig.44 Source: See text below

Ernest Gimson – Inglewood, Leicester

(1892; Fig.42, Plate 17)

[Image: NotFromUtrecht, Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 license.

Status: Extant and listed Grade II*. It was saved from demolition in the 1970s: See:

<http://www.leicestermercury.co.uk/saving-inglewood/story-13655987-detail/story.html>

WR Lethaby – The Hurst, Sutton Coldfield (destroyed)

(1893; Figs.43 & 44)

[Images: From L. Weaver, 'Small Country Houses of Today' V.1 (1911) - Sourced by the EWS]

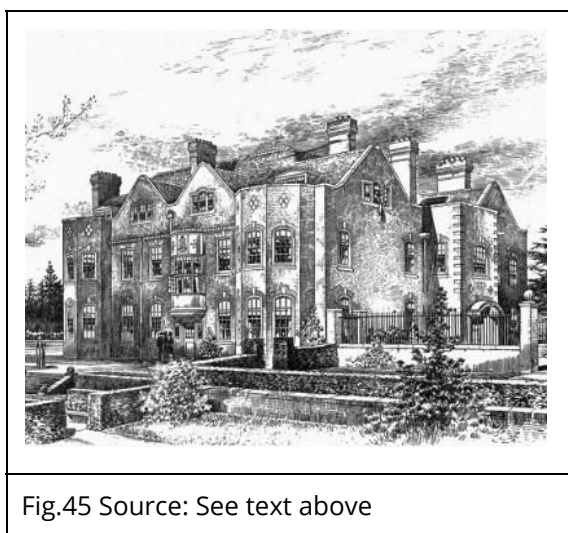
Status: Destroyed.

Ernest Newton – Redcourt, Haslemere

(1894-95; Fig.45)

[Image: From Academy Architecture 1896-I - Sourced by the Edgar Wood Society (EWS)]

Status: Extant and listed Grade II.



Other Buildings

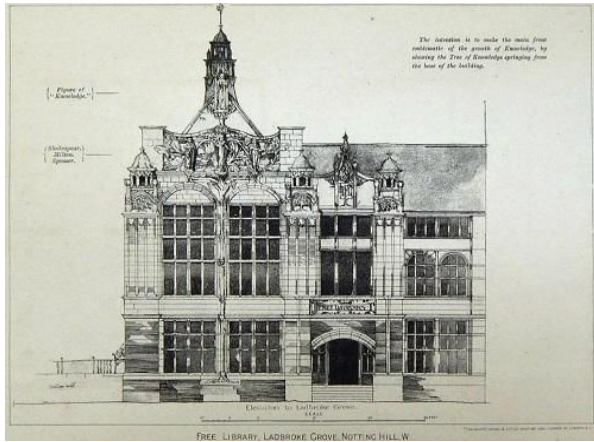


Fig.46 Source: See text that follows



Fig.47 Source: See text that follows



Fig.48 Source: See text



Fig.49 Source: See text



Fig.50 Source: See text



Fig.51 Source: See text that follows



Fig. 52 Photo: See text

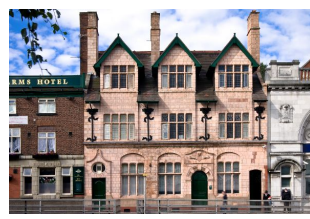


Fig. 53 Photo: See text

Henry Wilson – Ladbroke Grove Library

(1890-91; Figs.46 & 47)

[Image: From the Architect, 20/06/1890 - Sourced by the Edgar Wood Society (EWS)].

[Image: From H. Muthesius, 'Die Englische Baukunst der Gegenwart', (1900-01) - as above].

Status: Extant and listed Grade II. However, its design was much simplified upon execution.

E. S. Prior – Harrow Music School

(1890; Fig.48)

[Image: From the Builder, 19/10/1890 - Sourced by the Edgar Wood Society (EWS)].

Status: Extant and listed Grade II.

C. H. Townsend – Bishopsgate Institute

(1892; Figs.49 & 50).

[Image: From Academy Architecture 1895 - Sourced by the Edgar Wood Society (EWS)]

[Image: From H. Muthesius, 'Die Englische Baukunst der Gegenwart', (1900-01) - as above].

Status: Extant and listed Grade II*.

C. R. Mackintosh – Queen Margaret College Anatomical Dept (altered)

(1894-95; Fig.51)

[Image: From Academy Architecture 1895-I - Sourced by the Edgar Wood Society (EWS)].

Status: Extant and listed Cat B. However, it has been considerably altered and its setting significantly compromised.

To this list can be added the following two extant Edgar Wood buildings...

Edgar Wood – Temple Street Baptist Church, Middleton

(1889; Fig. 52)

[Photo: David Morris]

Status: listed Grade II

Edgar Wood – Manchester & Salford Bank, Market Place, Middleton

(1892; Fig. 53)

[Photo: Andy Marshall]

Status: listed Grade II

Local Collection of Pioneering Semi-Detached Houses

139. As part of this broad stylistic evolution across all types of building, Edgar Wood designed no less than ten pairs of semi-detached houses, with all but one in Middleton between the years 1886-1912. In these successive designs, one can follow a fascinating stylistic evolution.
140. The houses are as follows...
- a. 1886c. *153-155, 157-159 Manchester Old Road*. Two large brick and stone symmetrical townhouse pairs - unlisted
 - b. 1887 *West Lea, 161-163 Manchester Old Road*. A similar plan to the above but elevated as a contrasting stone building based on vernacular forms - unlisted
 - c. 1891 *Redcroft & Fencegate, Rochdale Road*. Set piece asymmetrical vernacular country houses in brick and render - listed Grade II
 - d. 1892 *Hillcrest & Briarhill, Rochdale Road*. Contrasting set piece symmetrical art nouveau townhouses - unlisted
 - e. 1895 *2-4 Schwabe Street*, highly asymmetrical country cottage styled houses on a slope - unlisted
 - f. 1899 *51-53 Rochdale Road*, almost symmetrical disciplined design in rustic brick and stone - listed Grade II
 - g. 1903 *Azo House & Crenden*, 90 Birkby Lodge Road, 109 Birkby Hall Road, Huddersfield, irregular stone vernacular styled houses - listed Grade II
 - h. 1907 *104-106 Higher Wood Street*, compact asymmetrical rural cottages - unlisted
 - i. 1907 *22-24 Mount Road*, Alkington, compact symmetrical design blending flat roof modernism with a country cottage aesthetic - unlisted
 - j. 1912 *165-167 Manchester Old Road*, symmetrical modernist design with a striking triangular form with long rows of windows that wrap across bays - unlisted
141. This unique group of semi-detached houses remains intact with no losses other than a degree of detailed alteration to some buildings. All the houses after 1892 refer back to one or the other of the contrasting set piece designs of Hillcrest & Briarhill and Redcroft & Fencegate. Thus, both are fundamental milestones in this career-long stylistic evolution.

6. INFLUENCE OF HILLCREST & BRIARHILL

142. It is perhaps unsurprising - given their imposing scale and the use of red brick and terracotta in their construction - that the influence of Hillcrest & Briarhill is more discernible in some institutions, rather than houses, which appeared in the wake of their completion and publication during the 1890s.
143. Rather than this factor being to the detriment of the houses' historical value, it instead provides a significant rebuttal to one key criticism which has often been levelled at the architecture of the Arts and Crafts Movement; that its themes, forms and use of materials were rarely translatable to the larger scale required for public and civic buildings.
144. If the shared Manchester connection of three significant, contemporary local architects - namely Edgar Wood, G. H. Willoughby and Charles Holden - is taken into consideration, it is arguable that Hillcrest & Briarhill might well have made an interesting contribution towards overcoming this criticism in at least a couple of instances - one of them being a ground-breaking London institution of national architectural importance, Belgrave Children's Hospital, London by Charles Holden.



Fig.54 Hillcrest & Briarhill by Edgar Wood [1892]

Photo: W J Smith c.1970s. Used with permission of Heritage Trust for the North West



Fig.55 Verdin Grammar School, Winsford, Cheshire by Woodhouse and Willoughby of Manchester [1895]

Image: Eirian Evans (2010). Used under the CC 'Attribution-ShareAlike 2.0 Generic' Licence. Available at: <https://geolocation.ws>



Fig.56 Belgrave Children's Hospital, London by Charles Holden [1899-1903]

Image: Tom Reading (2013). Used under the CC 'Attribution 2.0 Generic' Licence.
Available at: www.Flickr.com



Fig.57 Greaves Arms P.H., Yorkshire Street, Oldham.

Image: Alan Murray-Rust, Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 2.0.

145. In many respects, Hillcrest & Briarhill provided a useful template regarding architectural form and materials. Having promoted a bold, stripped-back, sky-scraping, red-brick aesthetic, the building's themes appear to have been initially admired on a local, Manchester-based level. These themes then appear to have been evolved by the London-bound Charles Holden in his seminal 1899 design for the Belgrave Children's Hospital. A native of nearby Bolton, Holden was an exceptionally gifted young architect who studied at Walter Crane's Manchester Municipal School of Art between 1893-94, followed by the Manchester Technical School between 1894-96. He is known, by his own admission, to have had contact with Edgar Wood during this period.

Case Study 1 Regional Influence: Verdin Grammar School, Winsford, Cheshire

by Woodhouse and Willoughby of Manchester

Built 1895 [Fig.55 listed Grade II]

146. Built half a decade before work began on Woodhouse and Willoughby's superlative London Road Fire Station in Manchester (1901-06; listed II*), the Verdin Grammar School provides several indicators that its creator/s possessed more than just a passing knowledge of Edgar Wood's recent domestic work at Rochdale Road, Middleton.
147. While the School's arrangement of a large hall set between two lower-set wings was not necessarily an uncommon feature in institutional buildings of the period, the canted 'step-down' blocks which flank the large central gable and join it to the wings do create a very similar 'Godwinian' effect to that found at Hillcrest & Briarhill. Of further comparative consideration is the overall redness at play in both buildings, broken up only by subtle use of terracotta. By examining the decorative first floor window surrounds of the school more closely, their resemblance to Wood's shared treatment of the Fencegate and Briarhill door surrounds is uncanny.³⁶ This degree of similarity in terms of materials and overall effect may indicate an exchange of ideas between highly respectable local architects who would definitely have crossed paths regularly within Manchester's active architectural circles.
148. The partner more likely to have engaged in such a discourse with Edgar Wood was G. H. Willoughby. Indeed, given that he was only a year older than Edgar Wood (having been born in 1859), and had delivered a talk to the Manchester Architectural Association in December 1890 entitled '*The Advantages of Terra-cotta Relative to our Town and City Buildings*'³⁷, it is possible that Willoughby's ideas might initially have inspired Wood. Considering the timing of Wood's brief experimentation with terracotta-infused building during 1891-92, Willoughby's arguments concerning use of the material within northern townscapes could well have merged with Wood's own studies in Arts and Crafts doctrine, prompting his creation of the Rochdale Road houses, Old Road Unitarian Chapel and the Manchester and Salford Bank (all during 1892). A mere three months after Willoughby's talk to the Architectural Association (of which both Willoughby and Woodhouse were Committee members), Wood delivered them a talk entitled '*An Architect's Study of Colour*'.³⁸
149. Overall, the outcome at Winsford is nowhere near as ground-breaking as that at Rochdale Road. However it does share with Wood's building a subtle New Art elegance granted by a lesser reliance on ornament and stronger reliance on architectural form to provide its core aesthetic appeal. This is particularly noticeable compared to the heavily ornamented work that was more often carried out by the Woodhouse and Willoughby partnership, some of it in the Edwardian Baroque idiom.
150. The School's design is also notable for a few "artsy-craftsy" features such as the rectangular flat-topped dormers and the picturesque, book-end chimneys that mirror one another from the ends of the building's wings. Both features

³⁶ See Copyright-restricted image at:

<http://17.alamy.com/zooms/956761862bf045c9b935b594a3ab938e/verdin-centre-winsford-cheshire-bjhmm4.jpg>

³⁷ Reported in *The British Architect*, December 5th 1890, p.435

³⁸ Reported in *The British Architect*, March 20th 1891, p.215.

would seem to suggest Willoughby and Woodhouse were paying at least some attention to the domestic aesthetics explored by Wood and other emergent artist-architects with a taste for the vernacular.

151. If one compares the school's evolution in style from earlier G. H. Willoughby designs³⁹, and if one considers the compositional similarities between his later design for a house in Bramhall (Fig.59, c.1911, untraced) and Wood's design for Dunarden, Archer Park, Middleton (Fig.58, 1897-98, demolished), the case for Edgar Wood having influenced the creation of Verdin Grammar School becomes an even stronger one.



Fig.58. from *Academy Architecture 1898-I*
Source: Edgar Wood Society



Fig.59. from *Academy Architecture 1911-II*
Source: Edgar Wood Society

Case Study 2 National Influence: Belgrave Children's Hospital, London

by Charles Holden

Built 1900-1903 [Fig.56 listed Grade II]

152. Charles Holden is not rare in having been inspired by the work of Edgar Wood, however he is rare for admitting to it. This is particularly significant because personal admissions concerning key influences upon highly successful individual architects are far from a common occurrence.

153. When discussing his breakthrough 1897 Design for a Provincial Market Hall entry for the R.I.B.A. Soane Medallion, Holden admitted in an undated letter to John Betjeman that his draughtsmanship owed something to both Wood and Beresford Pite. He went on to declare:

³⁹ Such as a row of shops in Wolverhampton, illustrated in *The Building News*, September 12th 1884.

*'I knew Edgar Wood, and he didn't approve of my use of his idiom'*⁴⁰

154. It can be assumed by comparing Edgar Wood's work to Holden's design output during the 1890s (Holden's student years in Manchester) and 1900s (his early years in the practice of H. P. Adams), that Wood's influence upon Holden (who was 15 years his junior) was not limited to his style of draughtsmanship; it appears also to have related to broader themes, forms and motifs. Following conversations with Holden's later assistant Charles Hutton, Holden's biographer Eitan Karol has confirmed that the admiration Holden held for Wood was of a broader, architectural nature:

*'Holden felt that Wood was a fine architect, who should not have retired so early on (in 1922, at the age of 62).'*⁴¹

Listing some of Holden's designs in the lead up to and directly after his Belgrave Children's Hospital (which was Holden's first executed design for H. P. Adams), one soon uncovers some fascinating correlations between the two men's work. At roughly the time a design for Marland Mission Church would have lain upon Edgar Wood's desk (Fig.60; c.1896-97, destroyed),⁴² Holden entered the 1896 Building News Design Club student competition with a Golf Pavilion design featuring a very similar tower and chimney arrangement (Fig.61; 1896, unexecuted). A year or two later, when Holden ghosted on three houses for Lord Lever's architect Jonathan Simpson at Port Sunlight, including 31-35 Corniche Road (Fig.63; 1897-99, listed Grade II), he employed *'lovely floral Art Nouveau decoration in shallow parquetry'*⁴³ which echoed Wood's published design for a terrace of houses and shop at Cheetham Hill (Fig.62; 1896, built a year later to a varied design, now demolished).

155. Even in practice with H. P. Adams in London at the dawn of the new century, Holden's work appears to have owed a significant yet largely unacknowledged debt to that of Edgar Wood. For example, his full design for the Tunbridge Wells General Hospital (Fig.65; 1901-04, half-executed, now demolished) surely takes various cues from Wood's imaginative layout at Long Street Church and Schools (Fig.64; c.1894-1902, listed Grade II*).

⁴⁰ Eitan Karol, 'Charles Holden' (Donington, 2007) p.66

⁴¹ Ibid, p.67, no.146.

⁴² John Archer's 1968 MA thesis chronology of Wood work reports the building had a foundation stone dated to June 1897.

⁴³ Edward Hubbard and Michael Shippobottom, 'A Guide to Port Sunlight Village' (Liverpool, 1988/2012) p.87.

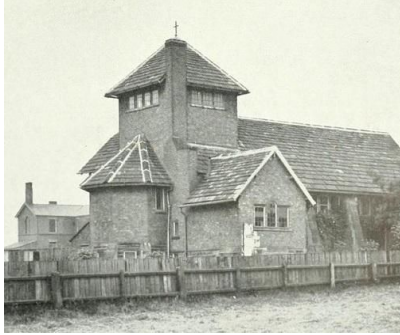


Fig.60 From *Moderne Bauformen* 6, 1907
Source: Edgar Wood Society



Fig.61 From *the Building News* 10/07/1896
Source: Edgar Wood Society

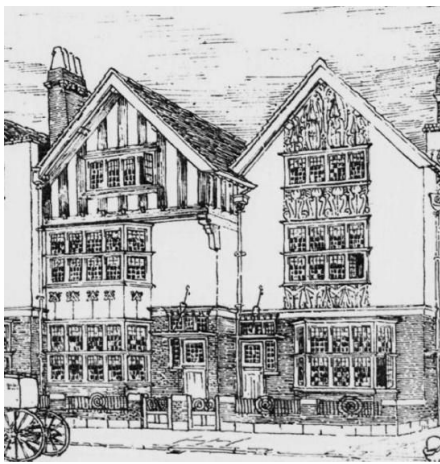


Fig.62 From *the British Architect* 20/11/1896
Source: Edgar Wood Society



Fig.63 Photo: Nick Baker

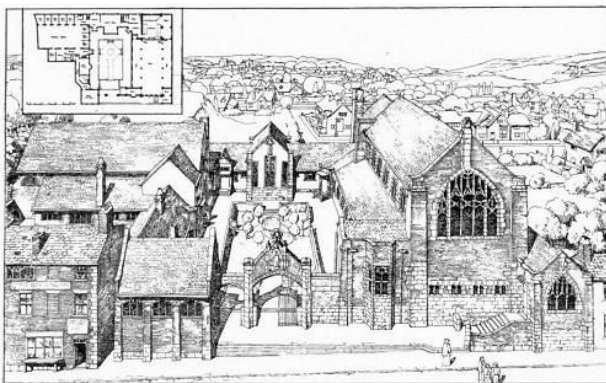


Fig.64 From *Academy Architecture* 1904-1
Source: Edgar Wood Society

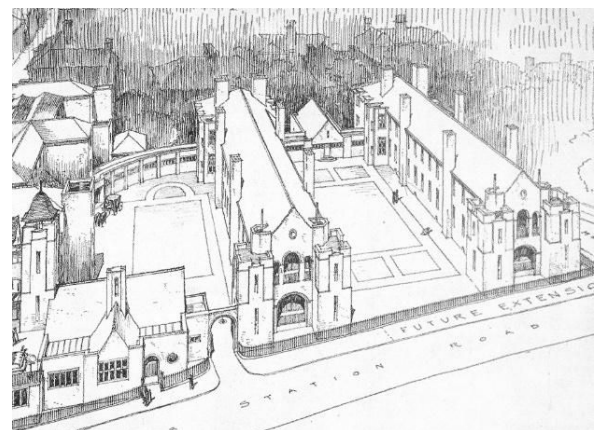


Fig.65 From *the Building News* 9/10/1903
Source: Edgar Wood Society

156. From April 1892 until May 1896 Holden was articled to the little-known Manchester architect Everard William Leeson (1862-1915) whose Conservative Club at Blackley was opened in April 1893. As Eitan Karol points out, this club (a mere 2.5 miles closer to Manchester on the main Rochdale route from Hillcrest & Briarhill), would have been under construction during Holden's first year with Leeson.⁴⁴ Considering Holden probably shadowed Leeson up to Blackley to learn about methods of building construction, and that three of Wood's early Arts and Crafts-themed Middleton buildings had been published in *the British Architect* by the first week of 1893, it is entirely conceivable that the inquisitive eighteen year old student might have headed further north to Middleton in search of these avant garde buildings.
157. Even if Holden had not searched the streets of Middleton by the time he enrolled on the architectural course at the School of Art during 1893, he would surely have done so by the time he drew up his thoroughly "artsy craftsy" designs for the aforementioned *Building News Design Club* competition during 1895-96.⁴⁵ Hillcrest & Briarhill (not to mention several of Wood's other local buildings) had been published nationally by this point and Holden's testimony suggests he may already have made contact with Wood on a personal level by 1897. Due to Holden's personal diaries (some of which dated back to the 1890s) having been burnt at his death, it is impossible to know precisely what relationship Wood and Holden shared.⁴⁶ However, if Holden ever visited Wood's house, Redcroft, prior to departing Manchester to work for C. R. Ashbee in London during March 1897,⁴⁷ he would unquestionably have witnessed the imposing red-brick presence of its towering neighbour-but-one. If nothing else, the sheer scale and redness of the houses may well have made a lasting impression upon Holden.
158. In conclusion, despite Holden's two known admissions of inspiration for his handling of the Belgrave Hospital's brickwork – that of Henry Wilson and Philip Webb⁴⁸ – there is also much room to argue he also took cues from the powerful, upward-driving New Art effect created by Edgar Wood's Hillcrest & Briarhill. As well as the bright red brickwork, the art nouveau attenuation of the hospital's form and features directly refer to Wood's design, as does the symbolic use of art nouveau kneeled gables which top the building. The strong pillar-like stair towers are exaggerations of the pilaster motif that Wood used on Long Street Methodist Church (1894-1902) and Lindley Methodist Church (1895, listed II) - developments that came shortly after Hillcrest & Briarhill.
159. As was likely the case with G. H. Willoughby's School at Winsford, conventional planning of the Institution (carried out at Belgrave by Holden's master H. P. Adams) did dictate its overall form in the broadest sense. However, the degree to which this form was brought to the fore and powerfully emphasised by stripping back Adam's proposed ornamentation, then emboldened with the employment of colour (including a contrast provided by the use of white stone around the Hospital's central doorway), and the degree to which Holden used its chimneys and gables to drive it skywards with vigour; these aspects could all have easily taken their cue from Wood's Hillcrest & Briarhill.
160. Ultimately, one rather insightful suggestion by Eitan Karol perhaps tells only half the story concerning the modernist inspirations a young Charles Holden brought with him to London from the area now known as Greater Manchester. In Karol's view, the Belgrave Hospital "*has far more in common with the Mills of*

⁴⁴ Eitan Karol, 'Charles Holden' (2007) pp.49-51

⁴⁵ Ibid, pp.52-64

⁴⁶ Ibid, pp.15-16

⁴⁷ Ibid, p.67

⁴⁸ Ibid, p.105-106

Lancashire" than with the "*late Victorian*" elevations originally proposed by H. P. Adams.⁴⁹ Whilst it is likely the mills of the north did feed Holden's Whitmanite desires to strip back the elevations of his institutional buildings, Edgar Wood's New Art approach to design seems also to have had a significant formative effect on this most important of London architects.

Case Study 3 Local Influence: Abbey Hills Road and Greaves Arms P.H., Oldham

[1901 Fig.66 unlisted and 1925 Fig.57 and Fig.67 unlisted]

161. Hillcrest & Briarhill spawned a local oeuvre of near symmetrical bright red brick and terracotta buildings with strong art nouveau verticality. The two examples here are separated by 24 years, illustrating the longevity of the style.
162. The 1901 semi-detached pair of houses on Abbey Hills Road (Fig.66) is most likely a builder's creation. In an otherwise plain red brick design, the art nouveau element is focussed on the two entrance bays, the right hand one being slightly more elaborate. The bays rise to break the eaves with a kneeled gable pointing arrow-like upwards, even though there is no dormer or roof behind the gable motif. This same leitmotif is also used above the right hand door, and is associated with attenuated pilasters either side of the door.
163. The Greaves Arms P.H. in the centre of Oldham (Fig.57 and Fig.67) is almost certainly architect designed. It is considerably more elaborate than the houses and somewhat transitional towards art deco, for example in the tall central window panel. Nevertheless, an art nouveau upward movement, expressed by the attenuated oriel bay windows with kneeled gables again breaking the eaves, dominates the design. The decorative broken pediment over the door is also art nouveau influenced while the textured green Westmorland slate roof pays homage to Edgar Wood's mixed original.
164. In both examples, the busy detailing is quietened by there being almost no colour contrast at all. Both are good examples of the local urban art nouveau tradition established by Hillcrest & Briarhill.



Fig.66 1901 Abbey Hills Road, Oldham
Photo: Nick Baker



Fig.67 1925 Greaves Arms P.H., Oldham
Photo: User Rept0n1x at Wikimedia Commons









⁴⁹ Ibid, pp.103-105

Experimental Architectonic Forms



Plate 18 Eyam Hall, Derbyshire (1671 listed Grade II*). Photo released into the public domain by its author, Davepape.

165. Nb. Several thousand images of the Historic England online listed building database *Images of England* and many architectural texts have been checked in researching this section.
166. As well as being a pioneering design, Hillcrest & Briarhill introduced new architectonic forms to the progressive designers' repertoire. The use of new forms was one of the dividing lines between different groups of Arts & Crafts architects. The German writer and architect, Hermann Muthesius used this division to structure the first volume of his study, 'Das Englische Haus', the monumental contemporary study of the Arts & Crafts Movement with regard to house design.

			
<p>Fig.68 Segmental cut-out</p>	<p>Fig.69 Kneeled gable</p>	<p>Fig.70 Attenuated pilasters</p>	<p>Fig.71 Art nouveau ornamental carving</p>
			
<p>Fig.72 'Whiplash' brackets</p>	<p>Fig.73 Upward Pointing Chevron</p>	<p>Fig.74 Plain masonry as a central feature</p>	<p>Fig.75 Triangular dormer and Diocletian window</p>
<p>All Photos: David Morris</p>			

Segmental Cut-out

167. See Fig. 68. The most striking new architectonic form found at Hillcrest & Briarhill is the series of semicircular cut-outs in the front perimeter wall. Combined with the structural polychromy of the wall, it creates a vibrant rhythmic quality that counters the large unified appearance of the houses. This is the first known instance of the form which was subsequently used in Edwardian Free-Style as well as art deco architecture.

Kneeled Gable

168. See Fig. 69. The kneeled gable is an old English vernacular form, prominently seen in Pennine stone buildings. Eyam Hall, Derbyshire is a classic but extreme example, see Plate 18. The form can be found in various buildings of the Shavian

- type in the years before 1890, for example E. S. Prior's Carr Manor, Yorkshire (1881 listed Grade II) where it is simply used in a traditional manner.
169. It featured in a non vernacular context in Edgar Wood's first known solo work, Rhodes School (1884 listed Grade II) which has six examples on the front of the building, see Plate 10. This was followed by Temple Street Baptist Church (1889 listed Grade II), see Plate 11 and other designs. In the watercolour of Hillcrest & Briarhill, Edgar Wood added a tablet shaped form at the apex of the gable, and this subsequently became a less popular variant of the kneeled gable form. However, when constructed, Wood simply added a small finial instead of the tablet.
170. In such examples, the kneeled gable was gradually removed from its functional context. By the time it crowned Hillcrest & Briarhill, it had been transformed into an upward pointing arrow-like leitmotif symbolising growth and the New Art. From then on, it was regularly identified with English advanced design and often in a manner unrelated to its original function, for example as a decorative motif or for shaping the plan of a hopper head.
171. It subsequently became a popular everyday motif in the early to mid twentieth century. For example, it commonly crowned the gables of churches, mainly through the influence of Edgar Wood's, Long Street Methodist Church (1899 listed Grade II*).

Attenuated Pilaster

172. See Fig. 70. In traditional architecture, pilasters were outlined on walls to represent load-bearing pillars, perhaps alongside the real thing. They were forms which expressed structural compression. However, the attenuated pilasters used by Edgar Wood for the two storey bay windows of Hillcrest & Briarhill are quite different. They represent the tension of upward movement and new growth. Wood even added a small lip halfway up to maintain the sense of upward movement.
173. Though the attenuated pilaster and bow window combination never achieved the popularity of the kneeled gable form, it was nevertheless used by advanced designers in Britain and Europe, notably by Victor Horta in Hotel Tassel, no. 6 rue Paul-Emile Janson, Brussels (1893 UNESCO World Heritage List), see Plate 6, and Josef Hoffmann in Hochstetter House (1906 destroyed) and, less overtly, in Palais Stoclet, Brussels (1906 UNESCO World Heritage List), possibly the most famous art nouveau house in the world.
174. Interestingly, Edgar Wood combined the attenuated pilaster and kneeled gable forms into a single device at Long Street Methodist Church, which subsequently became a popular combined motif (see Fig. 64).

Art Nouveau Carving over the Entrances

175. See Fig. 71. Edgar Wood's development of art nouveau architectural ornament in the second half of the 1880s can just be traced from the few surviving examples and contemporary images. One strand involved the development of Adam styling found in classical interiors while another appropriated Japonaiserie and an aesthetic movement sensitivity.
176. The first external use of art nouveau carving was in 1886, in four round arches above the windows of Wood's Co-operative building (destroyed). By 1892, his art nouveau styling was mature and mainly influenced by natural plant and flower forms. At Briarhill, however, he focussed such carved ornament just on the entrances, showing further progression in design.

177. The carved stone panel above the door of Briarhill, and the similar one hidden behind the modern brick panel at Hillcrest are based on lilies and testament to Wood's skill as a designer. This type of ornament subsequently became very popular in the 1890s and early 1900s. The Hillcrest & Briarhill examples are among the earliest art nouveau architectural ornament in the world.

'Whiplash' Brackets

178. See Fig. 72. As an Arts & Crafts architect, Wood subscribed to honesty in the use of materials, where the nature of the material shaped the resulting ornamentation. The 'whiplash' found in graphical art nouveau did not easily translate into the materials of architecture so, rather than a literal copying of graphical motifs, Wood's response was symbolic in the manner of the kneeled gable and attenuated pilaster.

179. However, metalwork, especially lead work, was one material which allowed a more literal expression and here Edgar Wood shaped his hopper brackets in the manner of the art nouveau whiplash banners, not unlike those illustrated on the nameplate of the published drawing, see Plate 16. Nb. larger examples of hoppers occur on the nearby former Manchester and Salford Bank, Market Place (1892 listed Grade II).

Upward Pointing Chevron

180. See Fig. 73. The upward pointing chevron on the interior posts supporting the bay window of Briarhill is the earliest known instance of Wood using the motif. He gives it a slight curve to express the upward movement more strongly. The chevron had a minor role in art nouveau prior to it blossoming with the art deco, where it became synonymous with Edgar Wood's jazzy tile experiments. It is thus probably the earliest example of an art deco chevron anywhere.

Plain Masonry as a Central Feature

181. See Fig. 74. More a compositional experiment than a new form but one pertinent to the development of modernism is the use of plain masonry instead of an architectural feature at the centre of the design. Even the circular motif under the kneeled gable is determinedly understated so that the eye runs freely across almost bare masonry from the bottom to the top of the building.

182. The consequence is a deliberate duality expressing the semi-detached function of the building. For those used to admiring Victorian architectural balance, it is slightly uncomfortable to look at and might be misconstrued as a weakness in the composition. However, Edgar Wood regularly used a building's visual mass, form and materials to determine character, rather than a harmonious balance of architectural features and, as other buildings illustrate, this is no accident. Here, he succeeds in drawing attention to the height, mass and dual use of the building in a particularly forward-looking way. It also suggests the plain surfaces of architectural modernism.

183. Interestingly, C. F. A. Voysey used the same device in his equivalent townhouse pair, Hans Road, Kensington (1892 listed Grade II). Wood's example, however, seems to directly hearken to the front facade of Eyam Hall, Derbyshire, which has already been noted as an exemplar of the kneeled gable, see Plate 18.

Triangular Dormer and Diocletian Window

184. See Fig. 75. Here, Wood is exploring the merging two traditional features, one vernacular the other classical, into a single geometrical motif, a triangle containing a semi-circle. The Diocletian window subsequently became a popular motif in art nouveau. It was the segmental cut-out found in the front perimeter wall turned around. The combined motif however was less used on a dormer than on a gable.

Antecedent Art Deco

185. Hillcrest & Briarhill were designed as an expression of the emergent art nouveau, though from Edgar Wood's own individualistic perspective. His version of art nouveau which was simpler and more direct than his contemporaries and, with the benefit of hindsight, we can see that these broad characteristics were also expressed in his pioneering art deco designs, beginning with the First Church of Christ Scientist, Manchester (Plate 13, 1903 listed Grade I) and reaching a mature point with Upmeads, Stafford (1908 listed Grade II*) and Royd House, Hale (1914 listed Grade I).
186. The Hillcrest & Briarhill design specifically informs and presages Edgar Wood's art deco use of...
- symmetry around a central element
 - smooth plain masonry
 - geometric architectonic form
 - long rows of windows which wrap around bays, and
 - focussed non historicist ornament.
187. Consequently, in addition to pioneering art nouveau, Hillcrest & Briarhill can be viewed as an antecedent art deco design.

Case Study 4 Architectonic Forms: Carnegie Library, West Derby, Liverpool



Plate 19 Carnegie Library, West Derby, Liverpool Source: Public Realm

188. Such architectonic forms were subsequently taken up by Edwardian free-style designers in ways not necessarily related to art nouveau. At the Carnegie Library, Green Lane, West Derby, Liverpool (1904 listed Grade II), designed by the City Architect, Thomas Shelmerdine, the forms are carefully worked into an overall Renaissance classical idiom, see Plate 19.
189. The kneeled gable lies at the centre of a symmetrical reading room much in the way of Hillcrest & Briarhill, with attenuated pilasters below the kneelers, as Wood used at Long Street Methodist Church (see Fig. 64). Highly attenuated pilasters are also used on the corner turret becoming buttresses higher up. Rounded forms are used in the large arched window (Diocletian window in a gable), the pediment over the main entrance and, most obviously, in the scalloped perimeter wall which also has attenuated pillars. Finally, Shelmerdine uses an area of plain masonry between the entrance and the reading room, to visually separate the two parts of the design.
190. These architectonic forms are also present in five other twentieth century buildings of the immediate vicinity on Green Lane, showing how they had been taken up into mainstream architecture.

7. HILLCREST & BRIARHILL CLOSE UP



Plate 20 Hillcrest, 37 Rochdale Road, facade and gateway. Photo: David Morris.

Exterior

191. Edgar Wood's experimental architectonic forms are discussed in the *INFLUENCE OF HILLCREST & BRIARHILL* section above. The following is a broad description of the building itself.
192. The exterior facades of 37 Rochdale Road, Hillcrest, and 39 Rochdale Road, Briarhill, are almost identical with just slight variations thus ensuring the dead hand of absolute symmetry was avoided. The most obvious difference is that the two southern chimneys at Hillcrest were taller and more developed than those at Briarhill which created more drama at the juncture with Redcroft & Fencegate.
193. The central part of the building rises upwards dramatically, with echoes in the two double height bow windows. Each rises further by the kneeled gable at the centre of the composition and the triangular shaped dormers immediately above the bow. They act almost symbolically as arrows pointing upwards. The angled chamfer narrows the visual form to emphasise the attenuation. See Plate 20.
194. This upward drama is balanced by the mass and length of the overall building, so that it is not visually unbalanced. This is strengthened by the disciplined horizontal lines of windows which wrap around the bays.
195. The two tall end chimneys of Hillcrest have been lowered to the level of the roof and slated over, which reduces the visual drama when the building is viewed from the south. It also unbalances the design, giving the centre too much emphasis as the chimneys helped define the southern end of the building.
196. Unlike the published design watercolor, only the front wall is striped, which allows a sense of space between the perimeter and the front wall of the building. The reason for this change is discussed in *William Morris - Building Materials Lecture* below. As stated in the original publication, the building is...

"faced with Ruabon work in brick, bands, sills, etc, the stone being concentrated around the front entrance. The roof is covered with five colours of slates, small size, laid random, and blue ridging."

197. The concentration of the stone, and thus the ornament, around the entrance is an important characteristic of Wood's evolving aesthetic, plain buildings with focused ornamentation. The smooth undifferentiated red surfaces of the brick and terracotta over most of the building is balanced by the rich texture of mixed Welsh and Westmorland slate, 5 colours in all, on the roof.
198. This was pushing Arts & Crafts practice to the extreme and such mixing of slate would not be repeated again by Wood. Instead, he would rely on the natural variegation found within a single material. The effect, however, is very attractive and somewhat like the mixed coloured tiles that one finds in Suffolk and Cambridgeshire.
199. The houses have a series of decorative handmade wall plates with art nouveau designs which loosely match a series of terracotta vents.

William Morris - Building Materials Lecture⁵⁰

200. The original design watercolour shows the building with contrasting horizontal stripes, which had been Wood's practice prior to 1892. Normally, the colour scheme was red and yellow, as at Temple Street Baptist Church, see Plate 11.
201. However, between the painting and execution, Wood changed the materials so that they were all the same colour, so only the jointing was visible. He also built the Old Road Unitarian Church in a similar manner the same year and, in a slightly different manner, the pink coloured Manchester and Salford Bank.
202. This change with regard to materials can be traced to a lecture given by William Morris on 20th November, 1891 at a meeting sponsored by the Art Workers' Guild at Barnard's Inn, London. Whether Wood was there or not is not known but it was published shortly afterwards in the Century Guild's *Hobby Horse*, January, 1892. The following are extracts from the lecture which illuminate the reasons for Wood's decision regarding design and materials...

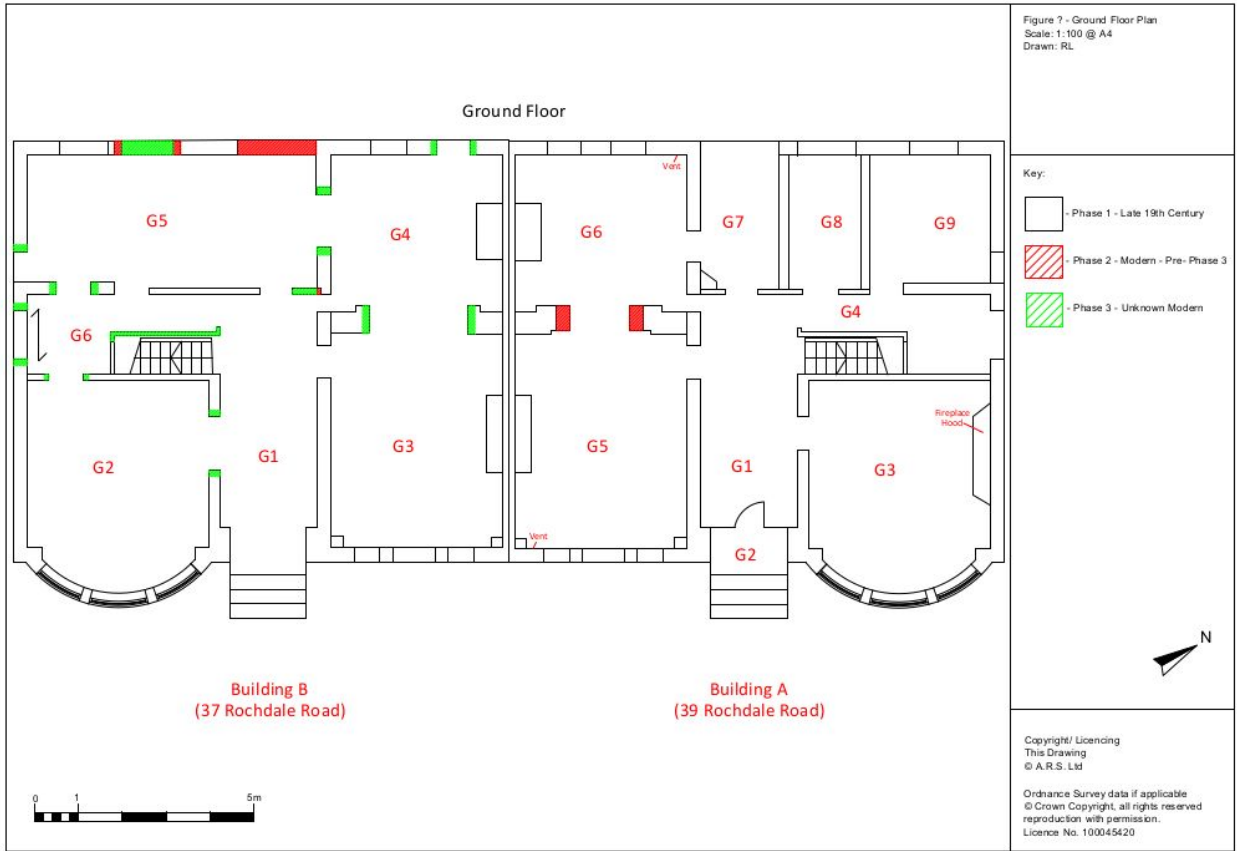
...it is a distinct and definite pleasure to see a large blank wall without any ordinary architectural features... this seems to me almost the beginning of architecture, that you can raise a wall which impresses you at once by its usefulness; its size, if it is big...

Take... the big municipal buildings in Manchester, built partly of brick and partly with freestone dressings... The freestone dressings are now getting a horrible dirty drab black... and the whole result is that whatever architecture there may be... is pretty much destroyed and obliterated by the dirt. If the building had been built entirely of brick it would have preserved its character; it would have got all darker together, and would have preserved its own outlines...

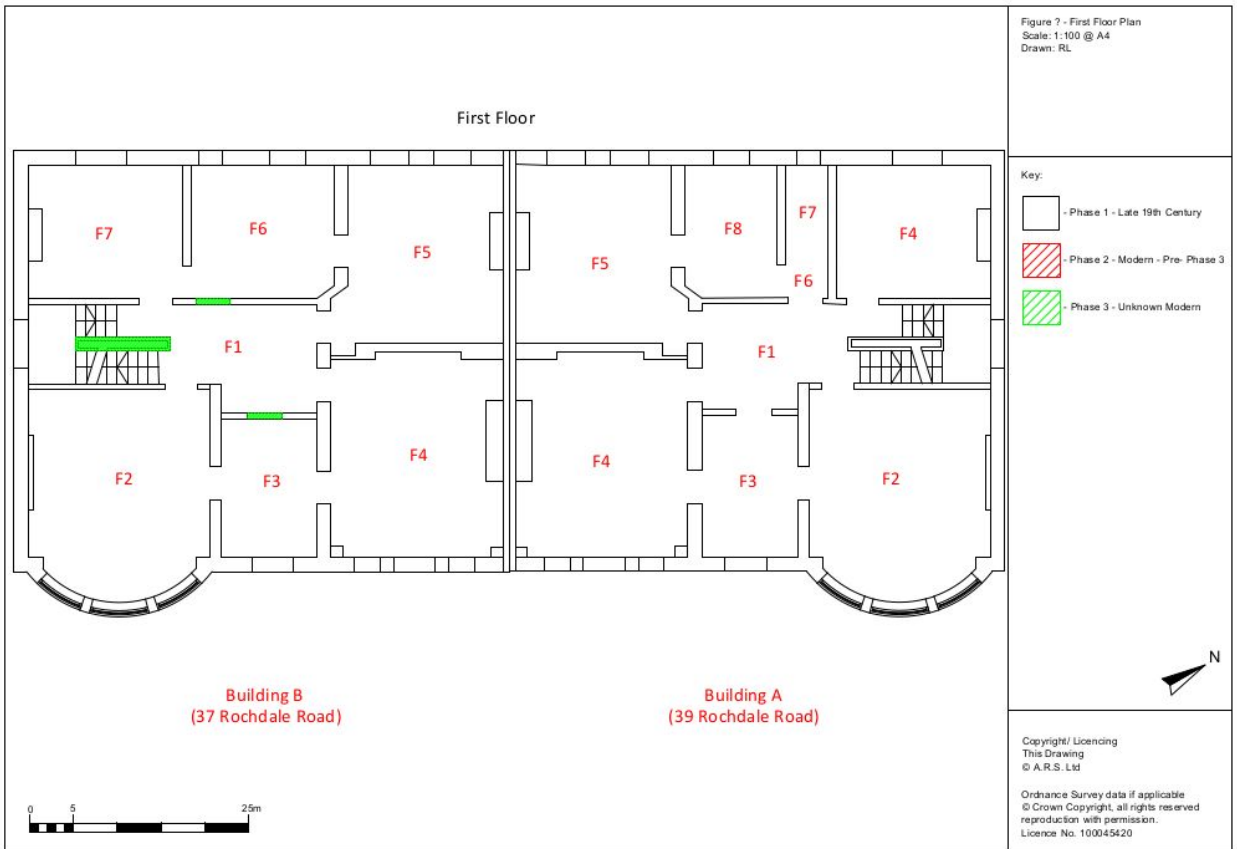
Now there is, by the way, another kindred material to brick, and that is the cast brick they call terra-cotta.... It is used for nothing else except ornament, and I am rather inclined to think that... the thing that is least wanted is ornament... I think one ought to pitch one's note rather low, and try... to get the houses and buildings to look solid and reasonable, and to impress people with their obvious adaptation to their uses; where they can be made big to make them big, and not to bother about ornament. Such ornament as there is, to keep it for the inside, where at all events it can be treated with delicacy...

203. Thus William Morris' views on making buildings big and plain with little ornament or variation in colour/material were thus accommodated by Wood in the building of Hillcrest & Briarhill.

⁵⁰ <https://www.marxists.org/archive/morris/works/1891/building.htm>



Plan 1 Ground Floor Hillcrest & Briarhill, 37 & 39 Rochdale Road. Copyright: Edge Structural Design



Plan 2 First Floor Hillcrest & Briarhill, 37 & 39 Rochdale Road. Copyright: Edge Structural Design

Interior Features

204. Note, access to the interior was not possible, so the following has been derived from plans and photographs. The interior of 39, Briarhill, has many surviving features whereas that of 37, Hillcrest, has been stripped out with only fragments and structural work such as interior window and door surrounds surviving.
205. In Briarhill high quality internal timber door and window surrounds, skirtings and ceilings, covings and mouldings survive in the principal rooms. There are at least two original cast iron art nouveau fireplaces in the bedrooms and an original cooking range in the kitchen. All other fireplaces seem to have gone.
206. There is a fragment of interior plasterwork with a painted flower motif in Hillcrest and a fragment of an ornamental strapwork ceiling. The paintwork shows it originally had a sophisticated art nouveau painted scheme and implies that Briarhill may have a painted scheme beneath the layers of modern wallpaper.
207. Edgar Wood designed whole interiors from decoration to furniture and there is no doubt that the fragment is by him. The reason is partly stylistic, the form of the rose motif is consistent with his design but also, as it is painted onto the plaster, it must have been done when the house was built. It appears part of a framing device around a central design on the wall, such as a painted scene or a piece of furniture, like a sideboard in a dining room.

Layout

208. See Plan 1. The bespoke layout of Hillcrest & Briarhill eschews normal convention by being principally concerned with the efficiency of internal circulation. The staircase is therefore turned ninety degrees to the hall so that doors of the three ground floor principal rooms relate well to the base of stairs, while the three service rooms are lined-up along the rear elevation parallel to the staircase with a service side entrance beneath the staircase.
209. Access to the rear yard and garden (originally beyond the regulation backstreet) is via a continuation of the axis of the hall, via a door that leads to a rear internal vestibule which leads outside. The vestibule separates the kitchen from the remaining two unheated service rooms. The staircase also accesses the cellars.
210. See Plan 2. The staircase ascends and turns back on itself to reach a roughly square first-floor landing, where six doors give access to the bedrooms, four heated, toilet and bathroom.
211. The staircase turns again to reach the second-floor where a wide corridor connects to another six rooms, two of them heated. Most would have been for servant accommodation.
212. The layout of Hillcrest and Briarhill was therefore particularly direct and efficient while also addressing the nuances of the social hierarchy of the time, for example separating the kitchen from the other service rooms and providing a hierarchy of bedrooms for both family and servants.

213. The planning also provided generous space for circulation and service tasks, something possible because Edgar Wood did not provide a third family room on the ground floor.

Natural Lighting

214. In the days of poor gas-light and primitive electrical light, making the most of natural daylight was essential. The plot was not ideally sited for natural lighting. The family rooms face south-east and so had no direct sunlight, apart from in the morning. It suited just one use, that of a morning room for visitors.

215. Consequently, Edgar Wood, who was always concerned about the practicalities of design, provided large tall windows to capture as much of the south eastern light as possible, which other than in the mornings, would have been indirect skylight. This explains the grid-like fenestration that runs right across the facade. The windows on the rear elevation are similar but smaller to prevent excessive solar gain in the working areas of the house.

216. Without a third family room, the morning and withdrawing rooms were combined into one. Here, the fenestration assists light capture as the tripartite projecting bow window would have allowed residents to sit or stand within direct sunlight, for reading, sewing etc. until around noon. The tripartite windows of the dining room similarly take up the full width of the room but are flush, there being little need for direct sunlight in a dining room.

217. The hallway is well lit from the large amount of glazing around the main doorway while the far end of the hall is lit by the out-of-view tall stair window.



Fig. 76 Hall



Fig. 77 Hall and Stairs

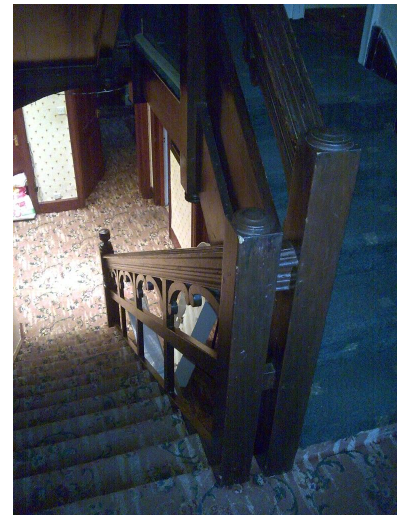


Fig. 78 Staircase



Hallway, Door Frames and Doors

218. See Fig. 76 and 77 and Plan 1 (Building A, G1) . A visual consequence is that the staircase is hidden when viewed from the main entrance and the visitor is presented with a small enclosed hall reminiscent of early eighteenth types such as that at nearby Old Falinge, Rochdale (listed Grade II), a building Wood would have known of.
219. The visual reference however is earlier as the hall is outstandingly presented with a curved ceiling of the type seen in Tudor houses, for example, Baddesley Clinton, Warwickshire (listed Grade I). Here, the ceiling follows the line of the curved door fanlight creating a slight tunnel effect. It is ornamented all over with art nouveau decorative moulded plasterwork so that the effect is a transforming blend of art nouveau, Elizabethan and Jacobean elements.
220. Each doorcase has a seventeenth century style triangular door frame head and these are linked to one another by a picture rail. They are similar to ones used at Redcroft. Uniquely, however, the tops are very slightly curved so the triangle is given a slight sense of upward movement. The overall effect is a unique art nouveau rhythm around the hall that has no contemporary equivalent. This type of door frame head is used throughout the house, except where a door sits beneath a Tudor style round head.
221. Several original internal doors survive overboarded with hardboard. The replacement six-panelled doors of the hall appear broadly in character because of their Georgian style but are not what Wood intended. The door to the cellar of Briarhill, however, survives uncovered and is almost certainly of the same style as the covered originals elsewhere, since it is a variant of door type Edgar Wood regularly used on other buildings, including Redcroft.
222. The door is a three panelled vernacular styled door of the type found on buildings constructed broadly between 1670 and 1730. The panels are around the same size except that that the bottom panel has the same organic pointed shape of the door frame heads. Thus the art nouveau/vernacular forms on the door heads are echoed in the bottom panels of the doors themselves. When visible, this further emphasises the visual vertical movement of each door.
223. Edgar Wood's appropriation of vernacular forms but reused to create art nouveau effects is a characteristic of Hillcrest & Briarhill.

Staircase

224. See Fig. 78 and Plan 1 (Building A, G4). The striking staircase is of a unique design also loosely based on vernacular forms but used in an eccentric art nouveau manner. The newel posts are functional looking and square, sometimes with turned sections, and topped at key points by a Lancashire vernacular style finial, similar to the one found in Long Street Methodist Sunday School. Only the bottom finial in Briarhill survives but there are several half ones in the walls and matching pendants.

225. There are no balusters as such, merely widely spaced square profiled posts to which pairs of vernacular looking timber scrolls support a heavy handrail again in the style of around 1700. Finally, a plain square rail halfway up the posts acts as a primitive safety rail below the handrail. The handrail is simply jointed into the newel posts without any ramping or shaping around corners.
226. Everything is deliberately simple, primitive and almost crude looking. The final flight to the servants floor is simpler still. Nevertheless, the effect is strong and robust, a counterpoint to the soft art nouveau shapes elsewhere.

Morning/Withdrawing Room and Bedroom Above

227. See Fig. 79 and 80, Plan 1 (Building A, G3) and Plan 2 (Building A F2). The room (G3) would have combined the function of a morning room, used for meeting visitors, with a withdrawing room, used to relax in the evening after dinner. The large bow window would have been aimed principally to benefit daytime uses - looking out for visitors, providing light etc.
228. The window bay lies beyond an extremely attractive yet robust bracketed beam which, with the semi-inglenook fireplace, would have provided a comfortable evening environment. The detailing is a unique blend of vernacular and art nouveau forms, an elegant double chevron around the vertical post echoes the shape of the door tops throughout the house. It points up to a curved double bracket, immediately above, a type of Japonaiserie that C. R. Mackintosh would be attracted to.
229. The semi-inglenook fireplace is a simplified version as the one used at Halecroft, with unusual short columns running across its projecting top. The chimney breast in the recess has been removed.
230. The bedroom above (F2) is similar though it has a lower floor to ceiling height. Here the chimney breast remains and the semi-inglenook is supported by a similar bracketed beam as used for the bow window in the room below. The two storey bow window in the bedroom has a flatter beam arrangement.
231. The curved brackets and the beam is a motif repeated in two other bedrooms in the design of a cupboard and some shelving, showing how Wood repeated motifs in different situations.

Dining Room

232. See Fig. 81 and and Plan 1 (Building A, G5). Other than the hall, the dining room was the other large family space, located adjacent the kitchen (G6). The use declares itself in its long proportion and relatively flat chimney breast, to allow space for a long table with chairs either side.
233. A recess on the back wall, see Plan 1, now knocked through to the kitchen (in both houses) would have been the location for a large sideboard to serve the table. The sideboard would most likely have been designed by Edgar Wood as part of a complete interior scheme and might have looked something like the one used at Halecroft, see Fig.11.

8. DETAILS OF OWNERS AND OCCUPIERS

234. The land to the western side of Rochdale Road was glebe land purchased for individual development plots by an Isaac Thorpe, who owned the Spring Gardens silk mill opposite. Redcroft & Fencegate and Hillcrest & Briarhill were the first plots to be developed. They originally had additional plots to the rear across the back-street for gardens.

Hillcrest

235. The first owner of Hillcrest was Henry Simpson Batey (1861-1937), a land agent and surveyor, who was listed at the house in the 1894 Electoral Register. He was described in an article in the Middleton Guardian as the steward or warden to the rector of Middleton, the Rev T E Cleworth, so Hillcrest would have been conveniently close to both the parish church and the rectory.

236. He had been articled to the Manchester surveyor and mining engineer William Bell, who had built up a successful business at the time of the railway boom and whose offices were at the corner of Cross Street and King Street in Manchester. In 1891 he was admitted to the Chartered Surveyors' Institution. He acted as agent for many large estates and charities including the Booth Charities, Clarke's Charities and the Hulme Trust Estates. On the death of William Bell in 1899, he took over the practice and employed his nephew, Fraser Mair, as a partner.

237. In the 1891 census he was shown living with his wife and daughter at an address in Urmston, close to his wife's family. The reasons for his move to Middleton were probably associated with his work for the church.

238. It is not known whether he knew Edgar Wood personally, but he probably had some dealings with Wood's stepmother, Jane, who attended St Leonard's church, and commissioned a stained glass window there in 1891.

239. Batey continued living at Hillcrest until his death in 1937. His widow then went to live with their daughter, the wife of the Rev A L Robson, vicar of All Saints' Rochdale.

Briarhill

240. The first owner of Briarhill was Arthur Edwin Jones (1859-1930). He was listed there in the 1894 Electoral Register, and was named in an indenture of 26 June 1895, which described him as a bleacher, dyer and finisher.

241. There had been two previous indentures (2 Aug 1893 and 15 Jun 1895) concerning a mortgage between Isaac Thorpe, the land agent, and two persons named Abraham Sutcliffe and Mary Thorneycroft. Sutcliffe, a joiner by trade, and Mary his widowed sister both lived in Oldham, but there is no evidence that they ever lived at Briarhill. The fact that Sutcliffe was a joiner suggests they may have been involved in some building or interior decorating work in the period 1893 to 1895.

242. Arthur Jones was one of four sons of James Jones, the head of the dyeing and bleaching firm Obadiah Ashworth and Company of Rhodes, and all the sons were employed as partners in the business. The family home was "Woodville" at 366 Manchester Old Road, a short distance from the works.
243. Arthur and his brother Frederick Richard were both amateur musicians and early members of the Manchester Beethoven Society. They also helped set up the Middleton Choral Union, of which Frederick was conductor. Frederick played the violin and Arthur was organist at St Leonard's parish church for several years.
244. In 1889, Frederick commissioned Edgar Wood to design a house for him on Sunny Brow Road. This was "Westdene", Wood's first large detached house, see Plate 12. Arthur at this time was living a short distance away on Archer Park, and both houses were close to Wood's family home on Sunny Brow Road. Both brothers had Edgar Wood design new work for their houses in 1894. Arthur's was a billiard room extension and Frederick's was probably the same as it involved a large bay window, thereby lengthening the room (see bay window Plate 12 rhs). Only the latter was built.
245. Arthur only stayed at Briarhill for three or four years. By 1901, he and his wife and three children had moved to a large house in the Bramhall Park area of Cheadle Hulme, Cheshire, called "Arden Grange". This house was previously occupied by Lizzie and Edward Collier, the daughter and son-in-law of Edgar Wood's cousin, John Sykes of Acre House, Lindley. It had been built for them in the early 1890s, and there is a possibility that Edgar Wood was the architect, especially as he later designed Briarcourt in Lindley for John Sykes's son, Henry Higginson Sykes. However, no documents, plans or photographs have been found to prove or disprove this.
246. The next occupant of Briarhill was Thomas Mills Chadwick (1840-1905), a partner in the firm of Messrs Chadwick and Smith of Boarshaw Bleach and Dye Works. His previous house was Irk Bank House on Boarshaw Road, next door to Edgar Wood's mother-in-law, Emily Jelly, but it is not known how closely he was acquainted with either the Jellys or the Woods. He was a widower and lived with his three grown-up daughters.
247. Thomas died in 1905, but two of his daughters continued to live at Briarhill until their deaths in 1954 and 1960.

9. WIDER SIGNIFICANCE - COMMUNAL VALUE



Plate 21 Rectified image of Hillcrest & Briarhill for conservation purposes. Photo: James Brennan Associates for Alan Gardner Associates.

248. Significance is a collective term for the sum of all the heritage values attached to a building. Historic England define four high level cultural heritage values that people want to enjoy and sustain for the benefit of present and future generations, at every level from the *familiar and cherished local scene* to the nationally or internationally significant place.
249. These four interlinked high level values range from *evidential*, which is dependent on the inherited fabric of the place, through *historical* and *aesthetic*, to *communal* values which derive from people's identification with the place. The report up to this point has principally considered evidential, historical and aesthetic values. This section considers the wider significance of communal values - that is the meanings of a place for the people who relate to it, or for whom it figures in their collective experience or memory.

Middleton Heritage Community

250. The Middleton heritage community has led on local heritage matters since the setting up of the Middleton Civic Association in 1974. It initiated proposals for the original Middleton Conservation Area, designated in 1978, and the 1990's English Heritage funded conservation area partnership grant scheme which restored several Edgar Wood buildings. It also undertook the placing of green Edgar Wood plaques on his buildings and blue heritage plaques in other locations.

251. By early 2005 the community was vibrant and strong enough to support several heritage groups, so that an overview and co-ordinating group was established called *Middleton Heritage and Conservation Group*, which subsequently was shortened to *Middleton Heritage*. This group, which now represents eight active societies⁵¹ undertook the Conservation Area Appraisal, extension of the conservation area, acquisition of Long Street Methodist Church and Schools (marketed as The Arts & Crafts Church and Middleton Edgar Wood Centre) by Greater Manchester Building Preservation Trust, and, the subsequent voluntary sector conservation activity associated with the £2 million Middleton and Edgar Wood Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI), one of the largest in the country.
252. It has since taken a leading role running events, making films, producing trails and heritage documents and undertaking public consultation. It now has a social enterprise company called the Arts & Crafts Trust, in recognition of the strong Arts & Crafts Movement heritage of Middleton. The joint Arts & Crafts Church and Middleton Heritage weblog site <http://artsandcraftschurch.org/> was set up in October 2012 and has published over 260 posts on Edgar Wood and aspects of Middleton's heritage.
253. With specific regard to Hillcrest & Briarhill, the Edgar Wood Society component of Middleton Heritage has kept a watching brief on the building over many years, regularly reporting any problems to the authorities. They keep a photograph and post about Hillcrest & Briarhill on permanent display on the homepage of the Middleton Heritage website.
254. This large core of active volunteers has sufficiently raised the profile of Middleton's heritage for the creation of three new heritage groups⁵² and the very active *Old Middleton, New Middleton* Facebook group which has 5,790 members compared to a total Middleton population of 40,000 people.
255. The above outline shows that heritage generally and Edgar Wood in particular have extremely large communal value in Middleton, to the extent that it has reached out into the mainstream.

Middleton Town Centre Conservation Area

256. Hillcrest & Briarhill were placed just inside the northern boundary of the 1974 Middleton Town Centre Conservation Area, a clear indication that from the very beginning they were considered significant heritage buildings by the community.
257. This boundary was subsequently extended following a formal appraisal undertaken by Middleton Heritage under the guidance of heritage consultant and architectural photographer, Andy Marshall. Middleton Heritage subsequently undertook a detailed Appraisal mapping exercise. It also contributed to the Conservation Area Management Plan and undertook a conservation area tree survey, all under the guidance of the Rochdale Council conservation officer. People volunteering for onerous conservation area surveys and research is an indication that communal heritage values are exceptionally strong. These reports

⁵¹ Middleton Civic Association, Edgar Wood Society, Middleton Archaeological Society, Friends of Jubilee Park, Middleton Family History Group, Greater Manchester Building Preservation Trust, Middleton Heritage Film Group and Middleton History Research Group.

⁵² Middleton Archaeological Society, Middleton Heritage Film Group and Middleton History Research Group.

and maps can be downloaded from the Middleton Heritage website

<http://artsandcraftschurch.org/grants/conservation-area/>

258. With specific regard to Hillcrest & Briarhill, a consequence of conservation area status is that their significance forms part of the wider character and appearance of the conservation area. Under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the local planning authority, Rochdale M.B.C., has a *legal duty to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance* of the conservation area, and thus the significance of the building. In this way, the communal heritage value is embedded in law.

Conservation Area Appraisal (2008) and Appraisal Maps (2010)

259. The adopted Middleton Town Centre Conservation Area Appraisal (2008) highlights Hillcrest & Briarhill as a *building at risk* while the accompanying Appraisal Maps (2010) identify them as a *Grade 1 Building of Local Interest*. These attributes were ascribed from communal heritage values by the authors Middleton Heritage.
260. Middleton Town Centre Conservation Area Appraisal refers to Hillcrest & Briarhill, Nos. 37-39 Rochdale Road, as *White House Hotel*, a recent but now defunct name...
- 3.3.13 *The next group of significant properties are those designed by Edgar Wood. At the very north of the area, adjacent Fencegate and Redcroft, is White House Hotel (Nos. 37-39 Rochdale Road built in 1893 as semi-detached residences. Across the road a terrace of houses built in 1898 bears the Edgar Wood mid-period style. These buildings have a significant 'group value.'*
- 3.4.8 *There are many buildings in Middleton designed by Edgar Wood which span his whole career. This unusual collection of historic buildings requires conserving as a single entity. In the conservation area these range from early works, such as Nos. 37-39 Rochdale Road, through to his first building with a reinforced concrete roof, No. 36 Mellalieu Street.*
- 3.4.9 *The Wood buildings are important examples of the Arts and Crafts movement which allow a rare opportunity to follow the development of a renowned architect at the turn of the nineteenth century.*
261. The appraisal was written by the heritage community in 2007 and is now somewhat dated. The above extract refers to Hillcrest & Briarhill as being part of a small townscape cluster within a wider group of Edgar Wood buildings and which should be conserved as such. Over the ensuing nine years, research steadily increased the level of community appreciation of individual buildings. By the time of the Appraisal Maps project in 2010, all the unlisted Edgar Wood buildings were graded as *Grade 1 Buildings of Local Interest*, the highest grade. The correctness of this approach was illustrated when the least of these unlisted buildings, Middleton Independent Labour Club, Milton Street was spotlisted Grade II in 2014 and featured in Historic England's 2015 Yearbook.
262. Consequently, communal value for individual buildings such as Hillcrest & Briarhill is changing and has become greater since 2008. This present study is likely to have a considerable effect with regard to Hillcrest & Briarhill.

Conservation Area Management Plan (2010)

263. The *Conservation Area Management Plan*, adopted December 2010, contains a summary significance statement of the conservation area (thus updating the Appraisal) under five headings, one of which relates to *Edgar Wood*. It also defines *Edgar Wood Heritage* as a *Theme or Character Area* to define the character of the conservation area and structure the proposals of the Management Plan. It highlights the importance of conserving individual buildings...
- Many of these buildings require careful restoration and this is one of the principal aims of the ... management plan.*
264. It also proposes the establishment of an Edgar Wood Heritage Trail.

Core Strategy Planning Policies

265. The enormous present-day communal value of Middleton's conservation area and its Edgar Wood heritage is well represented in Rochdale Council's mainstream planning policies. The policies that best express this are extracted or summarised below.
266. **Rochdale Publication Core Strategy - January 2013**, page 13, **2 Spatial Portrait of the borough** states...
- Middleton derives much of its identity and visitor appeal from a fascinating heritage, including Edgar Wood's buildings, and conservation initiatives will be supported by the Core Strategy.*
267. **Policy SP3/M - The Strategy for Middleton**, page 34/5 states...
- The priorities for Middleton are to:*
- Promote local heritage (Strategic Objectives SO1,SO3,SO4,SO5) by:*
- *Identifying a heritage focus area north of the town centre and promote measures to enhance this area ... (Policies P1,P2,P3);*
268. **Policy E1/M - Establishing Middleton as a thriving town centre**, page 50, states...
- We will: ... Improve links with the Middleton conservation area and promote its potential as a visitor attraction based on an Edgar Wood trail...*
269. **Policy E5 - Encouraging the visitor economy** states...
- We will focus on promoting the following tourism opportunities:... (in Middleton, where we will:*
- a. Promote the heritage of the Conservation Area north of the town centre, based on the architecture of Edgar Wood...*
270. **Policy P2 - Protecting and enhancing character, landscape and heritage** is the principal heritage policy. It states...
- 2. *We will protect the borough's heritage by:*
 - a. Conserving, enhancing and promoting key heritage assets, both statutory and non-statutory, including consideration of their wider settings. Key heritage assets of the borough include:*

- i. Four outstanding conservation areas: ... Middleton ... ;*
 - iv. The Edgar Wood and J. H. Sellers cultural heritage; ...*
 - b. Conserving, enhancing and utilising other non-statutory heritage assets of local interest... including promoting their sensitive restoration;*
 - c. Using heritage assets positively and intelligently to strengthen identity and image and support the visitor economy ... and*
 - d. Prioritising the conservation of heritage assets at risk from decay, ...*
- The borough also contains some important cultural landscapes ... These include: ...*
- The architecture of Edgar Wood and J Henry Sellers, mainly in the Middleton area; ...*
- Designated and non-designated heritage assets must be conserved in accordance with their significance ... The value of heritage assets in terms of their contribution to place making, image, tourism, ... culture, education ... will be informed by ... as well as other studies and information and the views of local communities.*
- ... those assets which are the subject of local designations should be conserved with respect to their external appearance, character and setting... Of particular importance are heritage assets at risk to which special attention will be given.*

North West Arts & Crafts Community

271. Hillcrest & Briarhill are identified as a significant part of the Arts & Crafts heritage of the North West by Barrie and Wendy Armstrong in their 2005 handbook⁵³. This was a popular mainstream publication identifying the significant buildings and craftwork associated with the movement, and with a substantial section on Edgar Wood. The authors are active public speaker and the book quickly sold out and was followed up by similar handbooks elsewhere.
272. The authors refer to the massive symmetry of Hillcrest & Briarhill and the large size of the houses where, unlike Redcroft & Fencegate, there is no attempt to disguise the fact they are semi-detached. The broad central bay rising through the eaves to a gable and the flat-topped bow windows set in front of the dormer windows are highlighted as significant features.
273. Within the subregion of Greater Manchester, Edgar Wood is also an important cultural phenomenon, with various internet sites dedicated to his life and work. However, apart from his most famous building, First Church of Christ Scientist, Manchester, he is probably unknown in the western parts of Greater Manchester where he never built.
274. The above illustrates how Hillcrest & Briarhill are currently valued by the regional Arts & Crafts and architectural history communities. Value is expressed by way of comparison to familiar Edgar Wood houses, like Redcroft & Fencegate. Again, this present study should begin to change perceptions within these communities.

⁵³ Barrie and Wendy Armstrong, 'The Arts & Crafts Movement in the North West of England - A Handbook', 2005 Oblong Creative, Wetherby Pg. 97

Scale and Nature of Communal Value

275. Although there have been no opinion surveys undertaken, the above is evidence of the scale and nature of the communal value regarding Hillcrest & Briarhill. One aspect lies in their association with Edgar Wood and the conservation area, which both resonate throughout the local community. However, this is without any great understanding of the building itself as this has never existed until now. Even the names Hillcrest & Briarhill were unknown.
276. Hillcrest & Briarhill are highly prominent on the principal north-south route of the town and most likely thousands of people pass them by each day. Their striking size and appearance and, more recently, poor condition will have registered with many people and the communal value of the building may be associated with its visual quality and presence in the street scene. This is confirmed by their association with a small townscape cluster within the conservation area.
277. Communal value of the Edgar Wood heritage and conservation area has grown through a lifetime's activity by the local civic and heritage community, which identified Hillcrest & Briarhill as significant as early as 1974. This has spread to the general population and is encapsulated in visitor events, marketing and community activities. It is also contained in the planning policies of the local authority, illustrating the significance of Edgar Wood to politicians and officials. This scale of communal value is unusual outside nationally acknowledged heritage places.
278. With regard to wider than local significance, Edgar Wood holds an important position in Greater Manchester heritage circles and is part of the wider cultural identity of the city region.

10. SIGNIFICANCE INFORMING CONSERVATION

279. A building's individual history and logic should inform a conservation solution. Most repair is relatively straightforward, where an appropriately experienced surveyor and contractor are employed. Likewise, the restoration of lost features using the evidence of old photographs etc. is generally straightforward. Neither are especially shaped by significance of the building where they fit within a well-known period building type. With regard to Hillcrest & Briarhill, some of this applies, but as a building of exceptional and unique significance, some conservation issues should be carefully informed from a significance perspective.

Unique Early Art Nouveau and Antecedent Art Deco Building

280. Hillcrest & Briarhill comprise the best early art nouveau semi-detached house pairing in the country, and possibly Europe. They were so advanced of their time, they are also an antecedent of art deco, which Edgar Wood also pioneered later.
281. Notwithstanding the wider cultural values inherent in Hillcrest & Briarhill, it is the wholly unique qualities of their design, construction, national and

international influence and relationship to a tiny elite group of related buildings, that are most relevant to conservation. Any approach should be cognisant of this and the following are four instances of how significance might inform conservation matters.

Historical Settlement

282. In the vicinity, several buildings have been affected by settlement due to poor ground conditions. The matter was dramatically addressed at Fencegate in the 1990s by the total demolition of the building and its re-erection on modern foundations, thereby losing most of its historical integrity in the process. Had it not being part of the intact Redcroft, the building would have been delisted.
283. Such an approach is obviously highly undesirable for Hillcrest & Briarhill, where the historical settlement is also somewhat less. Today, there is also greater expertise where specialist conservation architects, engineers and surveyors have a more nuanced understanding of the structural characteristics of traditionally constructed buildings. Nevertheless, the unusual significance of Hillcrest & Briarhill should also inform more modest responses, since Edgar Wood was an experimental Arts & Crafts architect who didn't always follow Victorian custom.
284. In other similar buildings⁵⁴, Edgar Wood avoided foundations in the modern sense but built upwards from a simple brick footing laid directly on a firm base of clay or rock. This represents the standard method for vernacular buildings and is generally effective where the masonry is traditionally constructed using hot-lime mortar, which Edgar Wood also emulated⁵⁵. This creates a pliable wall which accommodates the consequential movement caused by the soft foundations. It can lead to a picturesque deformation which makes vernacular buildings particularly attractive. Edgar Wood sometimes illustrated his design drawings in this manner and evidently found it appealing.
285. It should be noted that this was not so far away from the standard Victorian foundation which, broadly speaking, was in a transition from the earlier vernacular method towards the mid-twentieth century approach of rigid foundations and rigid walls. With regard to mortar, hydraulic lime was quickly replacing hot lime and Portland cement was also occasionally being used.
286. Public Health Act bye-laws varied but the model solution was for walls to have stepped footings (twice the width of the wall) with 9 inch thick concrete foundation under the footing unless the subsoil was solid ground, i.e. rock. Text books of the time suggested that Portland cement made the best concrete although hydraulic lime was the next best thing. A mix of 1:1:4 or 1:1.5:5, cement:sand:stone, was recommended. However, there was considerable variation of practice between local authorities and within individual authorities things could be quite lax.
287. In surviving drawings, it can be seen that for domestic buildings, e.g. 36 Mellalieu Street, Edgar Wood used very simple single brick footings without a concrete foundation beneath. With larger buildings, such as Long Street

⁵⁴ The foundations of Redcroft, 36 Mellalieu Street, Durnford Street School, Elm Street School, Milton Street ILP Club and Long Street School have been inspected in this regard.

⁵⁵ The mortars used at 36 Mellalieu Street, Milton Street ILP Club, Durnford Street School and Elm Street School were chemically analysed over the last decade showing hot lime mortars were used. Visual inspection of original mortars from several other buildings, e.g. Long Street Church and School confirm this.

Methodist School, he used a double brick corbelled footing and with very large buildings such as Long Street Methodist Church, he did actually resort to using concrete beneath the corbelled brick footing. Wood's method would have seemed merely backward-looking rather than revolutionary to his contemporaries.

288. However, this love of tradition was matched by an equal interest in technical modernity, such as cavity wall construction and the use of reinforced concrete which were used alongside the soft foundations and hot lime construction.

289. Some settlement was therefore anticipated at Hillcrest & Briarhill and even considered desirable from an aesthetic standpoint. Consequently, excessive straightening and levelling up, for example of the roof, would actually harm the historical interest and aesthetic qualities of the building. While no known plans exist of Hillcrest & Briarhill, it is expected that the foundations will conform to Edgar Wood's pattern, possibly with a double brick footing due to the height of the central gable. Assuming this is correct, these footings would also embody some significance and should only be replaced where absolutely necessary.

Traditional Response - Wall Ties & Pattress plates

290. Hillcrest & Briarhill were constructed partially on solid rock and partially on peat, which is an unpredictable material. This is evidenced by recent borehole samples and is the underlying reason for the greater than usual settlement.

291. Edgar Wood's response was to use wall ties in the design, a unique feature he did not use in any other building, thus indicating he was aware of the ground problems and concerned about differential settlement. The many pattress plates on Hillcrest & Briarhill are hand-forged to various early art nouveau decorative designs arranged methodically across the facade.

292. Such insertion of tie rods and pattress plates during construction commonly occurred in Georgian times and is evident where the pattress plates are neat and regularly arranged.⁵⁶ This precautionary approach was to address similar problems of that time, when builders had abandoned traditional thick mass walls for thinner more lightweight construction. The ties established a structural membrane to counter the poor ground conditions.

293. An interior photograph from the ARS archaeological survey confirms that the Hillcrest & Briarhill ties were inserted at the time of construction. They were put in immediately after the floor joists were laid, with neat cut-outs where they cross the joists. The floor boards were then laid on top. The ceiling below was then constructed hiding the tie rods from view. One of the plates is visible in the gable of Hillcrest in a photograph of Redcroft & Fencegate taken around 1905, see Fig. 2.

294. Had they been inserted later, it would have meant either removing the all floors or ceilings completely, inserting the ties, and then reinstating and redecorating, or, the cutting of slots through the floors or ceilings. Neither is evident and looking at things in the round, there are simply too many ties for them to have been inserted at a later date without making the houses uninhabitable for a long period.

295. Despite the precautions, there is physical evidence that the building actually settled while it was being constructed or very shortly afterwards. The left-hand

⁵⁶ 'Structures and Construction in Historic Building Conservation', ed. Michael Forsyth pg 30

two-storey bow window of Hillcrest is visibly off vertical. However, it was carefully brought to a level by wedge-shaped bricks that cut through the top two courses so that the top lined up with the eaves. This can be seen in early photos.

296. The inclusion of ties in the construction explains why the planned inglenook bay window for Briarhill with its detached chimney was never built, compare Plate 2 with Plate 3. Instead, Edgar Wood constructed a flush semi-inglenook which created a stabilising mass for 4 tie rods, something not possible with the original design.

297. Thus, Edgar Wood was consciously referring to the Georgian building tradition at Hillcrest & Briarhill in the way he responded to the poor ground conditions. It can be seen as part of the wider Georgian town reference point of the design. Consequently, the wall ties and pattress plates are part of the significance of the building and should be retained for reasons of significance.

Contemporary Response - Informed Conservation

298. Recent photographic evidence suggests that the building is still moving and the settlement is not all historic. Consequently, a detailed structural assessment from a conservation practitioner should assess the degree to which traditional conservation repair techniques are able to counter the effects or whether a more interventionist approach is necessary. A balanced solution that accommodates the significance outlined above is desirable.

Briarhill - Art Nouveau Stained Glass



Plate 22 The art nouveau stained glass in Briarhill was removed in the late 1990s or early 2000s.
Source: Middleton Local Studies

299. The significance of the leaded glass at Briarhill, so recently lost, is so great that the question of its possible restoration needs highlighting, even though this might feel somewhat theoretical when present realities are factored in. The windows nevertheless represented a unique expression of Edgar Wood's design work and were far more significant than once thought.

300. Wood clearly had a very individualistic and dynamic approach to glass design, which appears entirely unique for every building with which he was involved. In this case, the designs were among the earliest fully naturalistic leaded glass anywhere. Its significance was therefore indisputable, and represented an

- important stage in the aesthetic development of Arts and Crafts stained glass, with the addition of Wood's own unique twist.
301. Only five panels remain from the original glazing scheme, two of which depict large red tulip heads. They are made of mouth-blown cylinder glass and have a dimpled texture, and are situated in the doorway of the house. The sympathetic recreation of the glass could restore the aesthetic unity and Wood's original artistic intentions and would transform the significance of the building.
302. Any restoration work should be undertaken in accordance with the CVMA Guidelines, which state that, "*The insertion of infills ... [and] rearrangements ... should only be undertaken when fully justifiable based on thorough art-historical and technical research*" (CVMA 2004, Article 4.4.1). The windows can be intelligently restored by using several sources in the absence of high quality images of the original glass, or indeed, the original cartoons.
303. The American Architect and Building News reported that, *'The upper portions of many of the windows [at Briarhill] are filled with stained glass, the designs of which are taken from local growth.'* A close inspection of the lead-lines in the windows from photographs of the external façade corroborates this. There are dense naturalistic forms and foliage, with intricately intertwined branches and flower heads spreading throughout the length of the design. This is also very much in-keeping with Wood's aesthetic, as well as that of the later Arts and Crafts movement as a whole.
304. A colour photograph of the exterior of Briarhill when the original glazing scheme was still in-situ, shows that the glass used in the windows had an overall green tint. This is in-keeping with the overall feel of Wood's other domestic glass at Briarcourt (1894) and the bay window at Westdene (1894), which also depict natural forms and foliage. These windows are closest in spirit to the Briarhill glass, and therefore provide the closest reference point in terms of comparative design by Wood. A close though slightly earlier parallel would be the work of the Century Guild at Pownall Hall, Wilmslow (c.1887), where depictions of naturalistic forms are abundant. Examples from sources such as the now demolished Manchester Old Road Unitarian Chapel, also constructed in 1892, can provide a sense of the imagery of the windows at Briarhill and how they were executed. Wood was also producing this kind of imagery in other media, such as wood carving.
305. Restoration of the windows must begin with photographic evidence and the two remaining panels in the doorway. The lead-line could be re-created by tracing the lead work from the photograph which would determine the pattern and cut-line. The above evidence would inform in terms of colour and tone of the glass, which would be relatively muted so as not to dominate each room.
306. Evidence from the two extant panels depicting floral forms reveals Wood's utilisation of textured glasses to achieve an overall naturalistic impression. These glasses can be obtained from specialist outlets such as English Antique Glass (Birmingham), or Decorative Glass Supplies (Bradford).
307. As with any project involving stained glass, its conservation involves a collaborative approach between a team of specialists including conservators/restorers, art historians and architects (CVMA 2004, Article 1.5). The intrinsic value of stained glass is equivalent to that of any other work of art or cultural heritage, and its historical and physical context must be taken into account in the planning and execution stages (CVMA 2004, Article 1.5).

Briarhill - Surviving Original Roof Surface

308. The 1893 international publication stated that.. *The roof is covered with five colours of slates, small size, laid random, and blue ridging.*
309. It is therefore unique in concept and materials - a roof created from artistic and painterly motives, rather than architectural. The short description also disguises the great skill and artistry involved in creating an evenly mottled surface. The effect is a counterpoint to the smooth monochrome red character of the walls and Plate 1 gives a good indication of the aesthetic quality achieved, albeit after a century of smoke blackening.
310. Edgar Wood subsequently approached his wall construction in a similar manner. The detailed evidence of these walls implies that he must have personally overseen the careful blending of the brickwork, as it was so rigorously and artistically done. This is also likely to have been the case with the Briarhill roof, unless the roofer was also a skilled artisan of the Arts & Crafts school. The roof is thus a highly significant aspect of the building, from evidential, historical and aesthetic perspectives.
311. The unsatisfactory 2008 reroofing of Hillcrest illustrates how difficult it is to recreate the original aesthetic using normal methods of reroofing, which necessarily involve the destruction of the original surface and its reconstruction by artistically blending 5 different colours of Welsh and Westmorland slate.
312. Reroofing should be avoided unless absolutely essential and only then as a last resort. The preference should be for minimum intervention and localised repair. If this proves impossible, then there must also be a specific methodology to preserve the unique random qualities of the roof, for example by numbering the slates and precisely relocating them.



Plate 23 With the input of Rochdale M.B.C. conservation officer, Hillcrest was reroofed and masonry repairs undertaken to the bow window in 2008. Photo: David Morris

Briarhill - Surviving Interior Paint Scheme?

313. Briarhill was the slightly more special of the two residences, as evidenced by its attached garden to the north and ornamental leaded light windows. It was built for Arthur Edwin Jones (1859-1930), one of two brothers for whom Wood designed houses. He was most likely a friend.
314. At this time, Edgar Wood designed elaborate coloured interior schemes which were painted directly onto wall plaster. A fragment at Hillcrest survives, the remainder of the plaster unfortunately having been removed. For friends and wealthy clients like Arthur Jones, a scheme might also involve an elaborate pictorial mural painted by Frederick Jackson. Known examples include Redcroft (1891 see Fig. 13), Halecroft (1890) and Briarcourt (1894) as well as at the Manchester Old Road Unitarian Church (1892 demolished).
315. On cursory inspection, the original plaster at Briarhill appears to have survived beneath subsequent wallpaper. This raises the possibility that an intact decorative scheme might exist beneath, perhaps protected by a layer of varnish.
316. The existence of a coloured scheme is almost certain, a mural is reasonably likely and their survival in some form beneath the wallpaper is quite possible. Such a find, if only brought to light temporarily and recorded, might be of great academic and artistic interest as, to this date, virtually none have come to light.
317. One exception is a small scheme at 10 Harold Street, Middleton (1908 unlisted and altered). Even in such a modest cottage, the scheme involved brightly coloured walls and ceilings with hand painted frames and patterns. For example, the hall walls were painted in two shades of bright yellow and the ceiling pale blue, whereas in the parlour the walls were two shades of green and the ceiling was crimson with silver stars.
318. As a consequence, the knocking off of internal plaster should be avoided, especially in the main rooms on the ground and first floors. Owners should be aware of what possibly lies beneath the modern wallpaper surface and seek conservation advice before proceeding with removing wallpaper or plaster.

Restoration Priorities

319. Restoration work should sensibly follow the repair of structural defects. Once the building is repaired, the following illustrates how the relative significance of various features can help establish priorities for restoration. Where there is little available finance, as at the present time, such prioritisation is quite pertinent. The priority order is not meant to be rigid or used unthinkingly.

Priority 1 - Front Wall, Gateways & Gates

320. The scalloped front wall and gateways were influential and began a style that would continue through to the 1930s. They are also the point of contact with the public realm and largely determine the sense of quality of the building behind. Conservation standard cleaning and paint removal and the recreation of a gateway to Briarhill would transform the appearance and sense of quality. Large timber gates based on Edgar Wood's design watercolour Plate 2 should be provided. It appears that the intended railings in the drawing were not realised.

However, the two sets of existing railings are close to what Wood proposed and are loosely art nouveau in style. Consequently, their repair would achieve nearly as much as a restoration.

Priority 2 - Front Gardens

321. This is a simple low cost restoration priority that would have a major visual impact. Edgar Wood's original design illustration (see Plate 2) shows low height planting in the two front gardens and a framing tree to the north of Briarhill, which still survives. Except for the latter, all trees, leylandii and large shrubs adjacent the walls of Hillcrest & Briarhill should be removed to open up the views to the building and remove the potential for root damage to the foundations of the front wall and building.

Priority 3 - Entrance Doorways

322. The second point of contact where restoration would greatly improve the significance of the building are the two main entrance doorways. The remarkable entrance doorway of Briarhill is intact, including the Arts & Crafts letter box, but with only fragments of the art nouveau leaded light scheme.
323. It is the most significant individual feature of the building and the restoration of the complete ensemble, including the art nouveau stained glass around the door and removing the tiles, using professional architectural conservators is highly desirable. In the context that the restoration of the wider leaded light scheme is unachievable, this limited restoration would be sufficient to make a dramatic and significant impact.
324. The restoration of Hillcrest entrance, however, would be more speculative due to lack of evidence. A compromise solution, involving exposing the art nouveau stone panel above the door, may be the best way forward. Enlargement of the 1970s photograph in Plate 1 shows the panel actually in the process of being covered over by a single-skin brick wall. Removing the wall should expose the panel and both Hillcrest & Briarhill panels could then perhaps be conserved together.
325. It should be noted that Edgar Wood's standard practice was to paint white all doors, window frames, railings, gutters, hoppers, whiplash brackets etc. - it was the trademark of an avant garde designer.

Priority 4 - Ornamental Water Goods

326. The repair or restoration of water goods by an experienced craftsperson, especially the art nouveau hoppers and brackets, will help bring out the art nouveau significance of the building. The original design watercolour shows the use of whiplash brackets on all downpipes and these should be restored.

Priority 5 - Chimneys

327. The two lowered chimneys of Hillcrest unbalance the composition and should be restored. They also interacted with the chimneys of Redcroft and Fencegate, which have all been recently restored. Those to Briarhill are less important and are only partly lowered.

328. It should be noted that the restoration of the chimneys is placed down the priority list because, though they balance the composition and create townscape interest, they have little significance in themselves, being a common Victorian design feature. With a less significant building, restoration might have been top priority but the significance of Hillcrest & Briarhill establishes different values.

Priority 6 - Fenestration

329. The restoration of the Queen Anne style sash windows is placed as the last priority for similar reasons. While the windows contributed to the visual harmony and character of the building, like the chimneys, they were not the elements of highest historical or architectural significance.

330. Once the above issues have been worked through, the possibility of restoring some or all of the leaded light panels in the upper parts of the windows could then be considered. However, the restoration of the leaded lights around the main door in Priority 3 should be the principal objective.

CONCLUSION

331. Edgar Wood's Hillcrest & Briarhill design was published across Britain, Europe and the USA. It comprised architecture at the cutting edge and marked the full emergence of art nouveau architecture with new architectonic forms.

332. With their neighbour, Redcroft & Fencegate, they were designed as a contrasting pair representing two new directions in house design.

333. Hillcrest & Briarhill are part of a tiny group of experimental buildings by avant garde architects of the period. Even in this unique and outstanding group of buildings, Edgar Wood's design looks significantly more progressive with its direct and simpler forms and plain surfaces. Indeed, it can also be seen as an antecedent of art deco, which Edgar Wood also pioneered a decade later.

291. Hillcrest & Briarhill are one of an evolutionary series of semi-detached designs by Edgar Wood which steadily worked towards the new style. Consequently, Hillcrest & Briarhill also have group value within Edgar Wood's surviving oeuvre.

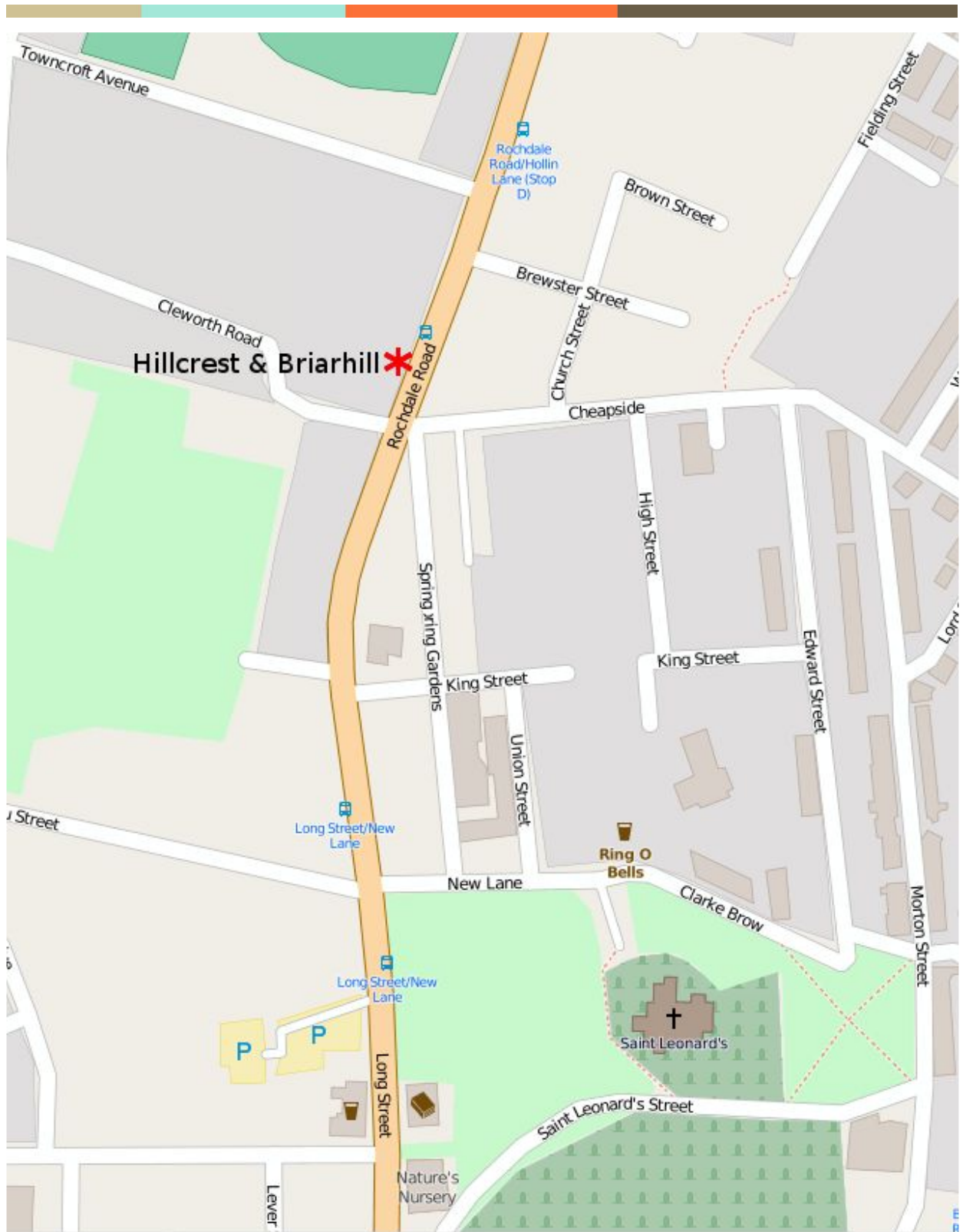
292. The communal heritage value of the Edgar Wood heritage is extremely high with large numbers of committed volunteers and a significant part of the population engaged through social media. The formal Council planning policies also reflect these communal heritage values.

293. Hillcrest and Briarhill remain largely as built, though with some damage - two of the six chimneys have been taken down and the original sash windows have been replaced and the interior of Hillcrest is a shell.

294. Due to its high significance, the building's repair and restoration should be a high priority, especially as neighbouring Redcroft & Fencegate are now fully conserved. However, this may take many years of incremental conservation.

295. Conservation work should be informed by the significance of the building. It should prioritise the repair of defects followed by the restoration of those features which best illustrate its national and international art nouveau significance.

APPENDIX - LOCATION PLAN



© OpenStreetMap contributors
Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 2.0 licence (CC BY-SA)
<http://www.openstreetmap.org/copyright>