



The Liverpool Legacy: Gordon Stephenson's Impact as Lever Professor of Civic Design

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Born into a Liverpool family in 1908, Gordon Stephenson was one of an outstanding cohort of students studying under Charles Reilly at the Liverpool School of Architecture in the late 1920s. With Reilly's encouragement and support, Stephenson won major scholarships and prizes that opened up opportunities for him to study and work in Paris and in the United States, thus laying the foundations for a highly successful international academic and professional career.

In this paper the focus is upon Stephenson's work at the University of Liverpool. After World War Two, he was attracted back to his alma mater to serve as Lever Professor of Civic Design. His impact in just five years (1948-53) was profound. The paper explores three main aspects of Stephenson's work in the Department of Civic Design. The first theme concerns planning education and his introduction of a radically new curriculum based around a taught Masters degree, the Master of Civic Design, open to well qualified graduates in almost any subject. The effect this had upon planning education more widely, in Britain and elsewhere, is examined. The second theme is that of the Town Planning Review, the international journal that had been edited at Liverpool ever since the Department was founded forty years earlier, but which had struggled to maintain production during the war. Stephenson effectively re-launched the journal, persuading a range of internationally renowned authors to publish in the Review, and using a number of other devices to raise its profile. The third and final theme concerns Stephenson's work in building up Civic Design as a planning school, in providing modern, purpose-designed accommodation and in recruiting staff to teach, to research and to engage in professional practice. The paper ends by examining Stephenson's legacy sixty years on.

KEY WORDS: Postgraduate planning education; planning schools; Liverpool; Stephenson; planning journal; legacy.