

An extraordinary woman: A biography of Sheila Haywood, Landscape Architect, ARIBA, FILA



Sheila Mary Cooper was born in Chittagong, Bengal, on 19 August 1911. Her mother was Ellen Mary Ann Gosset Rita and her father, Arthur John Cooper, a railway official who worked on the Bengal Railway. They married in Assam, Bengal on 5 October 1897. Sheila's early years were spent in Bengal but she returned to England and from 1929-34 she trained as an architect at the Architectural Association in London. In 1934, she was awarded an *Hon. Mention* for her fifth year, one of four such students. Although this was not the top year prize, it was still an outstanding achievement.

She took on associate membership of the Royal Institute of British Architects but, increasingly, her interest was moving towards landscape architecture. Among her first commissions were some of the last great gardens to be laid out in the UK before the war but, in the post-war period, the whole emphasis on landscape architecture moved to wider issues. This was to have a significant impact on landscape design, not least through the creation of new towns, industry and transport, national parks and other large-scale problems. It also brought her profession into increasing involvement with both the planning authorities and the public as well as with individual clients. Some of her early work included the Earle's Cement Works in Derbyshire, Wolverton Parks and the Pitstone Cement Works in Buckinghamshire.

In 1939, Sheila took up employment as assistant to Sir Geoffrey Jellicoe, founder and President of the Landscape Institute (ILA), and the best-known landscape architect of his generation. She was to work with him for the next ten years and said that she received her own landscape training through experience in his office.

On 27 January 1940, she married John Mason Haywood at St Pancras Register Office. Although she was already in practice as an architect, the marriage certificate indicated only that John Haywood was a solicitor; her profession was left blank. At the date of her marriage, she was living at no. 35 Mecklenburgh Square, a Grade II Listed square in King's Cross. Close neighbours included Virginia and Leonard Woolf at no. 37 (with the Hogarth press in the basement), and with Eric de Maré, arguably the best architectural photographer of the mid twentieth century, at no. 44. After her marriage, she moved to Sussex Gardens, close to Hyde Park. This was fortuitous since Mecklenburgh Square was bombed in a German air raid on 16/17 September 1940.

Sheila and her new husband already had something in common for John Haywood was born in Calcutta, India, on 20 August 1908 where his father, Horace Mason Haywood, was Secretary of the Bengal Chamber of Commerce. John Haywood was educated at Haileybury School from 1921-27. This was not unexpected since the previous institution at Haileybury was the East India College, the training establishment founded in 1806 for administrators of the East India Company. He then commenced his legal training. Later, in May 1941, the *London Gazette* recorded that he had taken up a commission in the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve (Special Duties Branch), a dedicated intelligence branch. He eventually became Flight Lieutenant, was awarded an MBE in 1945, and in

1948 he received a Military Medal of Merit in silver (Czechoslovakia). The medal was awarded for merit without active engagement in connection with the liberation of the country.

Sadly, it seems that the marriage did not last. John Haywood, who had been married once before, was recorded as having married again in 1954. He died in 1975 in St Pancras, London.

But these were interesting times. Sonja Dümpelmann wrote:

In the first decades of the twentieth century the young profession of landscape architecture provided women with both a challenge and a chance. The female pioneers were practicing as independent professionals before they had the right to vote. Many female landscape architects had to deal with discrimination. Although they frequently had male mentors, only a few women of the first two generations were offered positions in existing firms.¹

Dümpelmann contended that, although they were often working in the shadow of their male colleagues, many of these pioneering female landscape architects could be credited with exerting considerable influence on society and its physical environment. They became more flexible in their work, broadening their range of activities and seizing opportunities as they arose.

Through her work with Jellicoe, Haywood was now associating with some of the foremost proponents of her profession such as Sylvia Crowe, Maria Teresa Parpagliolo Shephard and Peter Youngman. She participated in the international conference of landscape architecture that took place in London in August 1948 and which was to lead to the setting up of the International Federation of Landscape Architects. After the conference, and along with Parpagliolo Shephard, she also led tours to manor houses and gardens in the west of England.

In 1949, Haywood set up her own consultancy and became consultant landscape architect to Bracknell new town. She also took on a commission as Landscape Architect at the Maple Lodge Disposal Works in Hertfordshire. In 1954, along with her colleagues Peter Youngman and Maria Parpagliolo Shephard, she was invited to design a garden for a family house. Called 'Housewife House', it was the subject of a series of articles in the magazine. The aim of the series, according to Sonja Dümpelmann, was to promote and cultivate domesticity

... which, it was believed, could be achieved by constructing spacious, sunlit, and airy homes and gardens. The series 'Housewife builds a house' ... perfectly fitted into British social and demographic politics at the time.²

Although, increasingly, her interest was in landscape architecture, Haywood still carried out the role for which she had been trained. In 1956, the *Ideal Home Book of Plans* ran a feature on seven 'notable' women architects. In the article, the first of the seven houses reviewed was designed by Haywood, specifically 'for a wife with a life of her own':

This house is planned for the professional woman, who is also a wife and mother. It gives her space for professional work, hospitality, and family life, all with the minimum of housework ... Absence of a larder is intentional: the architect stresses its superfluity with a refrigerator, ample shallow dry-goods cupboards, and a ventilated vegetable rack. Space exists for a deep-freeze if it can be afforded.³



The Ideal Home Book of Plans (1956)

This was still an era when women stayed at home to raise their children and keep house. Very few worked after getting married. But times were changing and, as a professional working woman, Sheila Haywood was in the vanguard of that change. Seemingly dismissive of her achievements, she said in 1966 that she did not consider that being a woman was unusual in her profession⁴ and, in many respects, this was not surprising. The last two presidents of the Landscape Institute, the notable landscape architects Sylvia Crowe and Brenda Colvin, had been women.

In 1959 Haywood was commissioned by the architects Sheppard Robson to draw up the master landscape plan for Churchill College, Cambridge. This was already a busy time for her: concurrent with her work at Churchill College she was working on the landscaping of the new Addenbrooke's Hospital site in Cambridge which was emerging on the arable fields south of Long Road. She was also Landscape Consultant for the 420-acre site of the Thorpe Marsh Power Station in Barnby Dun, South Yorkshire.

Haywood's involvement with Churchill College continued through the 1960s and 1970s but she was also starting to specialise in the landscape problems of the mineral industry. Some early commissions in sand and gravel had led to private practice where the treatment of many kinds of mineral extraction sites formed the bulk of her work. She became landscape consultant to Associated Portland Cement Manufacturers Ltd, advising not only on their stone and chalk quarries but also on their many other interests from sand and gravel pits and bulk handling plants to sports grounds and the afforestation of worked out areas. Together with consultancies for English China Clays and Tunnel Cement, the work provided opportunities for visiting and studying many aspects of extractive industry. In later years, she worked in Central Africa and travelled and lectured in the United States.

Arguably, Sheila Haywood's greatest influence was Sir Geoffrey Jellicoe, with whom she had worked for ten years from 1939-49. He was a founding member of the Landscape Institute and its President from 1939-49. Jellicoe's own design ideas were influenced by modern art and by Carl Jung's theory of the unconscious. One of his most important commissions was the master plan for Hemel Hempstead (1947) with the famous Water Gardens (1957-59) which were to become a landmark project in the history of English landscape and garden design. His other work included Shute House in Dorset, the Moody Gardens in Texas, and the Caveman Restaurant in Cheddar Gorge. His designs

were influenced by psychology and art and he was to become the first postmodern landscape and garden designer. The Landscape Institute has described his style:

*There are common hallmarks throughout including structured geometry, vistas, water, and designing to a human scale, but each of his designs is an inventive response to the site and the brief; he was invariably moving the game on, evolving from English traditional to modernist to allegorical and unclassifiable, and always at the forefront.*⁵

Of her own style, Haywood wrote in 1954:

*The shaping of trees is a subject which has always interested me: I would sooner see an exciting and stimulating shape in a commonplace tree or shrub than a horticultural rarity which lacked form.*⁶

The importance to her of shape and form can also be seen in her 1953 review of a book written by Susan Jellicoe and Lady Allen of Hurtwood in which she wrote:⁷

The photographs range through many aspects of design and planting, and through many countries but it seemed to me that in selecting them the authors had kept as their unifying motive, a sense of form. The subject may be a balcony in Toldeo, Shiplake Lock, or something more deliberately "contemporary", such as Thomas Church's Californian seascape, but everywhere there are the lovely shapes, level or fluid, containing or exploiting the vegetation.

In 1956, she attended the International Federation of Landscape Architects' Conference at Zurich and in a review of the event she wrote:

*Undoubtedly the most interesting contrast with English work is the universal technique of moving large trees. Here are no saplings, all sticks and labels to run for years the gauntlet of childish knives and adolescent spite. It is all there from the beginning: mature, settled and beautifully maintained.*⁸

In her work for Churchill College, Cambridge, she recommended the planting of semi-mature trees using big-scale varieties. She envisaged that the main College buildings would be held in a framework of evergreen oaks, *Mahonia aquifolium* and clipped box. She did not want to see too much variety introduced, preferring to retain the broad scale. Planting was not to be overly fussy but simple. The huge lawns and wide expanses were there to complement the architecture, not to be an opposing attraction. But she could also see the broader picture:

*There are strong arguments from a landscape point of view in favour of thinking on a time-scale of fifty to sixty years ahead, and sometimes even more.*⁹

Writing in 1979, in a review of changes in approach to the restoration of mineral landscapes, she said:

*The long term aim should be to create an area which will relate to its surroundings in such a way that future generations will suppose it always to have been so.*¹⁰

Haywood continued to work with Jellicoe on various occasions throughout her career and joined him as a consultant for the Central Electricity Generating Board (CEGB) schemes of the 1960s and 1970s. Here she carried out important work at the Hope Cement Works in Derbyshire, following in Jellicoe's footsteps by making a highly individual contribution to the evolution of the landscape around the cement works. Simon Rendel wrote:

*In the period up to 1985, Sheila Haywood, Jellicoe's erstwhile assistant, and subsequently John Windsor, developed the landscape concept and responded to new problems brought on by improved geological data. In particular, a key mound known as 'Haywood Hill' was created near the site entrance from waste material; this screens the views of low level plant from the North and North West.*¹¹

While working for Jellicoe, Haywood met his wife, Susan, a plant enthusiast, writer, editor and photographer. She also made the acquaintance of Sylvia Crowe, the landscape architect and garden designer, who was already making important contributions to landscape planning for new towns, roads and forestry. A visit to India was to result in the book 'The Gardens of Mughul, India' (1972). It was a joint collaboration between Haywood, Crowe, Jellicoe, and the landscape architect, Gordon Patterson,¹² who was later to follow in Haywood's footsteps by becoming Consultant Landscape Architect at Churchill College from 1992-1998. The book, published at a time of increasing international tourism to South Asia, explored the garden traditions of Persia and Asia. It comprised original research on garden plants with a general narrative intended to serve as a guide. A review in *Garden History*¹³ was critical of many aspects of the book, but noted that it was the first general book on the subject since Constance Villiers Stuart's 'Gardens of the Great Mughals' (1913), and to whom the book was dedicated. It is said that the book helped effect a shift from garden studies to garden history and the book is still cited today in reading lists for students of landscape history.

Sheila Haywood was clearly well respected within her profession. She became an Associate of the ILA in 1945 and a Fellow in 1956. In 1952, she was elected to the Council of the ILA on which she served for a further fifteen years. In addition to serving on Council, she sat on the Education Committee of the ILA drafting examination papers and writing book reviews and obituaries for the *Journal of the Institute of Landscape Architects*. Of her achievements, she was self-effacing. She wrote in 1952:

*I think probably the most useful work I have done in the past was in dealing with the restoration of a number of worked out gravel pits, and in helping to establish a standard method of approach to this problem.*¹⁴

In fact, her vision was far-reaching. She had identified that leisure could be the greatest untapped potential of worked-out quarries. Many quarries needed little more than the dismantling of derelict machinery and the 'encouragement of pioneer vegetation' before vegetation and nature would do the rest, while reservoirs could be made into 'food stores for the future' by being stocked with fish. This, she envisaged, could meet the need of 'urban millions' by giving them somewhere to go for a family day out. In an address to three hundred members of the Institute of Quarrying in 1972 she painted a glowing picture for the future of 'unsightly workings being transformed into tree-lined lakes, ideal for sailing, water ski-ing, wild life conservation or reservoirs ... why not, for instance, use these sites for all those pop festivals rather than recurring controversies with some unwilling village?' she suggested.¹⁵

In 1960, she declined the Council of the ILA's nomination to accept office as Honorary Secretary due to work commitments, and used the same reasons five years later when she declined their

nomination for the office of Vice-President. Her resignation letter to the Council of the ILA in 1967 revealed that she had also been asked to review the 'possibilities of undertaking the Presidency at a later date'. Although she was just 56 years old at the time, she said:

I believe I have been on the Council for some fifteen years, and have enjoyed it all. However, I feel that it is now time I stepped down, as I think it is extremely important to have vacancies available for the younger members who can bring a constantly renewed drive and enthusiasm to Institute affairs.¹⁶

She had made it very clear. Her main interest was in her work, and not on the accolades that might accompany it.

Sheila Haywood was clearly a talented landscape architect who had access to an influential group of landscape architects and town planners. Her work and style developed and evolved over the course of her career as she adjusted to new areas of interest brought about by changes in her profession, from working with highly demanding clients, to new planning legislation and advances in technology. She had an open-minded and flexible approach to problems and a deep interest in sharing her knowledge and experience with others. She was almost dismissive of the notion that her chosen profession might have been an unusual choice for a woman, despite living in an era when acknowledgement of that profession had been omitted from her marriage certificate.

She died in Surrey on 8 August 1993, aged 82 years. The Registrar of the Landscape Institute wrote:

Although I never met her I do know that she made an enormous contribution both to the Institute and to landscape. She served on numerous Institute committees and on the Council for 15 years. I understand that this dedicated service was finally recognised by her being nominated for Vice-President of the Institute which she apparently declined. Her work in the field of industrial landscapes and quarries is well known and I am sure will be recognised for years to come.¹⁷

Sheila Haywood was a modest, self-effacing person, but without doubt, an extraordinary woman.

Paula Laycock
December 2016

This is original research based on a number of different sources. There is no current biography of Sheila Haywood.

Acknowledgements:

Architectural Association
British Architectural Library
Landscape Institute Archives/Museum of English Rural Life, University of Reading

SHEILA HAYWOOD

Career Details

- 1929- Trained at the Architectural Association
1934
- Mid- Private garden design and restoration
1930s Preparation and planting plans: Earle's Cement Works, Derbyshire
Wolverton Parks, Buckinghamshire
Pitstone Cement Works, Buckinghamshire
- 1939- Assistant to Sir Geoffrey Jellicoe
1949
- 1949 Set up own practice
- 1949 Landscape Architect: Maple Lodge Disposal Works, Hertfordshire
- 1949- Landscape Consultant: Bracknell New Town
1950s
- 1957 Housing schemes at Chelwood, and at Sydney Road, Friern Barnet (Architects: Kenneth R Smith, W W Atkinson and Sheila M Haywood)
- 1959 Landscape Consultant: New Addenbrooke's Hospital, Cambridge
- 1959 Landscape Consultant: Thorpe Marsh Power Station, Barnby Dun, Yorkshire
- 1959- Landscape Architect: Churchill College, Cambridge
1974
- 1961 Adviser to Goldsmiths' College: Redevelopment of walled garden at Loring Hall and restoration of gardens at Pentland House, London
- 1961 Landscape Architect for house designed by Raymond Lockyer at Padworth Commons, Berkshire
- 1960s Adviser to Associated Portland Cement Manufacturers Ltd, English China Clays and Tunnel Cement, Thurrock, Essex (site now occupied by the Lakeside Shopping Centre)
- 1960- CEGB Consultant
1980 Landscape Consultant: Hope Cement Works, Derbyshire
- 1965 Landscaping: Colne Valley Sewage Works, Hertfordshire
- 1967 Landscaping: Nos. 42-51 Oaklands, Hamilton Road, Reading, Berkshire. A block of six maisonettes over four flats, built in 1967 to the designs of Frank Briggs and Peter de Souza of Diamond Redfern and Partners, with landscaping by Sheila Haywood. Grade II listed. The reasons for designation noted: The landscape design by Sheila Haywood, which retains elements of the older gardens, is of high quality and succeeds in tying these overtly contemporary buildings into their leafy Victorian setting.

Later Work in Central Africa
Years USA (lecturing)

Books and Articles

- 1954 Haywood, S M (1954): 'The Housewife House ... three experts plan a small garden', in *Housewife*, May 1954, pp. 56-59
- 1970 Haywood, S M (1970): Restoration of Landscape: Extractive Industries, *Journal of the Institute of Landscape Architects*, Vol.91, No.29
- 1972 Crowe, S, Haywood, S M, Jellicoe, S and Patterson, G (1972): 'Gardens of the Mughul India', Thames and Hudson, 1972
- 1973 Haywood, S M (1973): 'Landscapes', *The Quarry Managers' Journal*, March 1973, pp. 100-110
- 1974 Haywood, S M (1974): 'Quarries and the Landscape', *British Quarrying and Slag Federation*, Information Circular No.10, London, England, November 1974
- 1976 Haywood, S M (1976): 'The Mineral Scene: Choice and Opportunity', *Quarry Management and Production*, October 1976, pp. 251-254
- 1979 Haywood, S M (1979): 'Mineral Landscapes: the next ten years?' *Minerals and the Environment*, Vol 1, Issue 1, April 1979) pp. 25-30

Book Reviews

- 1953 Haywood, S M: Review of Susan Jellicoe and Lady Allen of Hurtwood's 'The things we see: Gardens', *Journal of the Institute of Landscape Architects*, July 1953, p. 14
- 1954 Haywood, S M: Review of Peter Shephard's 'Modern Gardens', *Journal of the Institute of Landscape Architects*, March 1954, pp. 10
- 1956 Haywood, S M: Review of Sylvia Crowe's 'Tomorrow's Landscape', *Journal of the Institute of Landscape Architects* June 1956, p. 17
- 1956 Haywood, S M: Review of the 'International Federation of Landscape Architects' Conference, Zurich, 1956', *Journal of the Institute of Landscape Architects*, November 1956, p. 6
- 1959 Haywood, S M: Review of the 'Colne Valley Sewage Works', *Journal of the Institute of Landscape Architects*, Autumn 1959

Other

- 1956 'For a wife with a life of her own' (1956) in *Ideal Home Book of Plans* (1956), pp. 70-71
- 1966 Brief article referring to Sheila Haywood in *Setsquare* (August 1966)

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- ¹ Dümpelmann, S (2010) 'The Landscape architect, Maria Teresa Parpagliolo Shephard in Britain: her international career 1946-1974', *Studies in the History of Gardens & Designed Landscapes*, 30:1, p. 94, DOI: [10.1080/14601170903217045](https://doi.org/10.1080/14601170903217045)
- ² Dümpelmann, S (2010), *ibid*, p. 107
- ³ In *Ideal Home Book of Plans* (1956) 'For a wife with a life of her own', p. 70
- ⁴ In 'Setsquare' (August 1966)
- ⁵ Landscape Institute, 'Sir Geoffrey Jellicoe', http://www.landscapeinstitute.org/PDF/Contribute/Geoffrey_Jellicoe_preface_for_website.pdf, accessed 10 September 2016
- ⁶ Haywood, S (1954) in Review of Peter Shephard's book 'Modern Gardens', *Journal of the Institute of Landscape Architects*, 1954, pp. 10
- ⁷ Haywood, S M (1953) in review of book by Susan Jellicoe and Lady Allen of Hurtwood 'The things we see: Gardens', in *Journal of the Institute of Landscape Architects*, July 1953, p. 14
- ⁸ Haywood, S M (1956) in review of the 'International Federation of Landscape Architects' Conference, Zurich, 1956', in *Journal of the Institute of Landscape Architects*, November 1956, p. 6
- ⁹ Haywood, S M (1974) 'Quarries and the Landscape', *British Quarrying and Slag Federation*, Information Circular No. 10, London, England, November 1974, p. 13
- ¹⁰ Haywood, S M (1979) 'Mineral Landscapes: the next ten years?' *Minerals and the Environment*, Vol 1, Issue 1, April 1979) p. 28
- ¹¹ Rendel, S (1991) Hope Cement Works 1943-89, *Landscape Research*, 16:1, 31-40, DOI: [10.1080/01426399108706328](https://doi.org/10.1080/01426399108706328), pp. 31-2
- ¹² Crowe, S, Haywood, S M, Jellicoe, S and Patterson, G (1972): 'Gardens of Mughul India', Thames and Hudson, 1972
- ¹³ Burton, J. L. V. "Garden History." *Garden History*, vol. 3, no. 1, 1974, pp. 38-41. www.jstor.org/stable/1586316
- ¹⁴ Sheila Haywood to Secretary of the ILA, 7 April 1952, *Landscape Institute Archives*, SR LI AD2/2/1/41
- ¹⁵ In *The Guardian* (1972), 'Use for finished quarries', 4 October 1972
- ¹⁶ Sheila Haywood to Secretary of the ILA, 7 February 1967, *Landscape Institute Archives* SR LI AD2/2/1/41
- ¹⁷ Peter Broadbent in letter to Ms Pat Leslie, 13 August 1993, *Landscape Institute Archives*, SR LI AD2/2/1/41