MENDELSOHN IN ENGLAND

by

Jonathan Glancey

Staircase in the De La Warr Pavilion, Bexhill in 1937. [RCHM England]

Born in 1887, Erich Mendelsohn was the exact contemporary of R.M. Schindler, Richard Kauffmann, Robert van 't Hoff, H.S. Goodhart-Rendel and, above all, of Le Corbusier. But while the centenary of Le Corbusier's birth was celebrated with some fanfare, comparatively little attention was given in 1987 to the career of his East Prussian contemporary. Yet Erich Mendelsohn was one of the most original and influential designers in Europe in the 1920s and he was certainly the most distinguished of the architects who arrived in Britain in the 1930s as refugees from Nazi Germany. Although Mendelsohn executed comparatively little in England and spent much of his time working in Palestine (then under a British Mandate), he was responsible for one of the very best Modern Movement buildings in the country: the unlikely Bexhill Pavilion. Jonathan Glancey here examines the brief but significant career in England of this great architect who become a British citizen in 1938.

Erich Mendelsohn once described himself as an 'East Prussian Oriental'. Naturally he was joking. Yet, in many ways, Mendelsohn was the archetypal 'Wandering Jew'. Born in 1887 in the small medieval town of Allenstein in East Prussia, (part of Poland since 1945), Erich Mendelsohn went to live in England and Palestine before settling like so many fellow expatriate German Jews in the United States. He died in Los Angeles in 1953.

Nevertheless, few architects could have been more German. When working on the design of the Cohen House (Old Church Street, Chelsea, 1936), his principal assistant Birkin Haward recalls 'I had to keep a more or less continual programme of Bach Brandenbergs and sonatas going. Sometimes Mendelsohn would require one particular movement to be played over and over again most of the morning'. Mendelsohn himself described Germany as a land of 'Bach and tears.' Like the Prussian he was, Mendelsohn could

appear, on the surface at least, moderate, rational, logical and unassuming. This was certainly how Birkin Haward saw him in the London office on a day to day basis. Yet at heart and just under the surface Mendelsohn was an unashamed romantic, a man in love with music, art, his family and his dreams of a brave new democratic world. As a Jew he also dreamt of a homeland free from pogroms and intolerance.

Mendelsohn came to England, or more correctly to London, in June 1933. He was by then undoubtedly a famous architect with many of his best buildings already behind him. These included the Einstein Tower, Potsdam (1921), the hat factory for Friedrich Steinberg, Herrman & Co, Luckenwalde (1921-23), the Schocken department stores in Stuttgart (1926-28) and Chemnitz (1928-29), the Metal Workers' Union Building, Berlin (1929) and the Universum cinema complex, Berlin (1926-31). When he arrived in England his reputation had gone before him even though the English knew precious little of the revolutionary movements in German art, design and architecture to which Mendelsohn was a passionate subscriber. It would have been difficult for many educated English to have understood the full impact of Mendelsohn's ideas and artistry until the exhibition 'Modern German Art' which opened in London in July 1938. This was the first time an English audience had seen, first hand, the work of the German Expressionists. Yet Expressionism, the major influence on Mendelsohn during his years as an architectural student, was at its peak some twenty years earlier.

Although a self confessed workaholic ('I never work less than sixteen hours a day'), and despite designing countless architectural projects during his time in England (33 in the second half of 1933 alone), Mendelsohn was only to complete three buildings between 1933 and 1936. These were all designed in collaboration with the interior designer and ballroom dancer Serge Chermayeff and were, in order, the Nimmo House, Chalfont St Giles (1933-34), the Bexhill Pavilion, Bexhill-on-Sea (1933-35) and the Cohen House, Chelsea (1936). Foreign architects, particularly Jews, were hardly in a position to call the shots in the Britain of the 1930s. Yet Mendelsohn was already a Honorary Member of the Arts Club before he arrived in England. He became a British subject, an FRIBA and moved in distinguished cultured and society circles. Moreover his influence on a younger generation of architects was immense.

To understand Mendelsohn's years in England it is necessary to trace the outlines of his Prussian upbringing and German career. Mendelsohn remembered his childhood as being one of 'uncontrolled happiness'. His father was a well-to-do merchant, his mother a talented musician. Erich was one of six brothers, all of whom except Erich himself followed in their mother's footsteps. The young Mendelsohn spent much time sketching the medieval castles surrounding Allenstein and, after a false start reading economics for a year at the Technische Hochschule in Munich, went on to study architecture at the Berlin Technische Hochschule in 1908. He returned to complete his studies in Munich, qualifying as an architect in 1912. Hugely influenced by the work of the Expressionists, Mendelsohn spent the next two years working as set designer and painter and drawing imaginary machine-like architectural schemes.

During active service with the Engineers on both the Russian and Western fronts throughout the course of the First World War, Mendelsohn managed, despite life in the trenches, to fill sketchbook after sketchbook with fantastic, Expressionistic architectural drawings. These embryonic buildings evoked in soft 6B pencil (he always drew quickly with soft pencils) revealed buildings that had as much to do with the flowing lines of futuristic cars, planes, ships and trains as they did with the mundane world of bricks and mortar. They had a practical and immediate result after the war ended, the design of the Einstein Tower, Potsdam completed in 1921. From then on Mendelsohn's German career flourished. His buildings were a highly charged, romantic and beautifully realised blend of the mechanistic and the organic, of hard-edged Cubist geometry and soft, flowing lines.

When he arrived in England, Sir Charles Reilly, the great Professor of Architecture at Liverpool University, described Mendelsohn as 'the most brilliant architect in Europe in the Modern school'.

Mendelsohn saw the Jewish question quite clearly when Hitler took power in 1933 and decided to leave Germany immediately. He and his wife Louise, the cellist he had met in 1910 and married five years later, left first to spend two months in Holland, celebrating a seventieth birthday party with the Dutch architect Henry Van der Velde, a friend and mentor, before sailing to England in June. On arrival Professor Reilly invited him to lecture at Liverpool. In *Scaffolding in the Sky*, Reilly recalled that 'the most dramatic of all the visits of distinguished persons to the school that year was that of Erich Mendelsohn, the great German-Jewish architect'. With help from the then RIBA President, Sir Giles Gilbert Scott, and RIBA Secretary Sir Ian McAlister, Reilly was able to persuade the Home Office to extend Mendelsohn's visa from five week to five years enabling the architect to become naturalized. 'The great man', wrote Reilly, 'was to become an Englishman . . . it was like adding a Continent to the Empire and one which would not cost us anything'.

Three buildings, two private houses and a seaside pavilion, did not exactly constitute a 'continent', but the Modern Movement in Britain was still at a very early stage in its development. Nevertheless within a matter of days he had teamed up with Serge Chermayeff and set up office on the top floor of the old Pantheon building at 173 Oxford Street (this building, owned by Gilbey's, for whom Mendelsohn & Chermayeff designed new offices in Camden Town, was demolished in 1938 to make way for what is now the black marble-clad Marks and Spencer shop). To practice in England it was necessary for a foreign architect to work with a registered British architect. Walter Gropius also recently arrived from Germany teamed up with Maxwell Fry and Marcel Breuer with F.R.S. Yorke. Mendelsohn and Chermayeff made an exotic team. Chermayeff, who had known Mendelsohn for some years and had visited the Mendelsohns at their new house in Rupenhorn in 1931, was a brilliant character, tall, of strikingly hawkish looks, loquacious if economical with the truth, sociable and entertaining. An Old Harrovian Russian Jew, whose real name was Issakovitch, Chermayeff literally waltzed his way through London society in his early days working as a professional dance companion to fund his burgeoning career as an interior designer. When he began working with Mendelsohn, Chermayeff was more or less new to architecture. Although already a member of the art group Circle and the newly formed MARS (Modern Architecture Research Group), he had designed just one small building, the crisp, white, Cubist Shann House in Rugby. Most of the previous two years he had spent working for Waring & Gillow as an interior decorator, although he had also designed some of the new studios at Broadcasting House for the BBC along with Wells Coates and Raymond McGrath, But just before the start of the Mendelsohn & Chermayeff partnership he had received a fresh commission to build another house, this time at Chalfont St Giles in Buckinghamshire. It was this project that Mendelsohn more or less took over and from which he launched his English career.

Yet although flamboyant, it was Chermayeff who saw projects, including the Bexhill Pavilion through to completion. He was actually a very practical designer and much concerned with the minutiae of furnishings and fittings. In this respect he was an excellent foil to Mendelsohn who was far more interested in painting across a broad canvas with an equally broad brush. Except, of course, when it came to the detailing of his beloved and always magnificent staircases, witnessed in England at both the Nimmo House and Bexhill Pavilion.

Chermayeff was without doubt a great admirer of Mendelsohn. On his visit to Berlin in 1931 Chermayeff made a short film 'Film Shots of Germany' which included footage of Mendelsohn's Metalworkers' Union Building as well as the Shocken store in Chemnitz, described by Chermayeff as 'a real breath of sea air in this city of stuffy architectural horrors of the nineteenth century.[1] When Mendelsohn joined him, Chermayeff had already built up an extensive social network and had many professional contacts of high standing and calibre. The office got off to the best possible start.

It was, from the beginning, an extraordinary and hugely talented team. Its members included, at various times between 1933 and 1936, Hannes Schreiner (of Austrian origin, Schreiner has been Mendelsohn's chief draughtsman in Berlin. They worked together, according to Birkin Haward, like 'composer and performer'), H. J. Whitfield-Lewis (who went on to become Chief Architect, Middlesex County Council), Colin Penn, Derrick Oxley, Lionel Pearce, Geoffrey Bazeley, Colin Crickmay, Birkin Haward, John Fortey (the furniture designer) and, according to Haward 'a tall Australian with a shaven head who was inevitably known as 'Wacko''. Crickmay and Whitfield Lewis worked closely with Chermayeff, while Haward acted as principal assistant to Mendelsohn.

What distinguished the office from the outset was its intimate working relationship with allied professionals. Cyril Sweet the Quantity Surveyor worked on all Mendelsohn and Chermayeff projects, while engineering was entirely the province of Helsby, Hamman and Samuely. Felix Samuely, another German emigré, was an early expert on all-welded steelwork construction, a technique he was able to employ for the first time on a large scale at Bexhill in 1934-35. To begin with the new practice was a remarkably close-knit and well matched team.

Nevertheless it was quite clear that Mendelsohn was 'autocratic', while Barbara Tilson writes 'the character of Mendelsohn's style pervades much of the partnership's work, seen for example in the arcs of the ICI Manchester site layout comparable with his (Mendelsohn's) 1929 entry for the German Nitrogen Syndicate Administration Building and the concave curve of the Gilbey facade which recalls several earlier designs in Germany such as his 1929 Berlin Metalworkers' Union Building. Further precedents can be found, Tilson adds, 'such as the spiral staircase which formed a pivotal feature at Bexhill and Shrubb's Wood (Chalfont St Giles) as it did in the Metalworkers' Union Building. And his own Rupenhorn home of 1929 was influential on the design of Shrubb's Wood and the Chelsea house'.

But Mendelsohn's dominance of the design work was perhaps inevitable given his considerable experience. In any case Chermayeff learned considerably from his partner and his own architecture was later to be all the better for their collaboration. One has only to look at photographs and drawings of Bentley Wood, the house Chermayeff designed on his own in 1938 (now sadly mutilated) to realise just what influence Mendelsohn had on him. Yet, inevitably, there were tensions between the partners. The practice finally

R. L. Nimmo's house, Shrubs Wood, Chalfont St Giles, photographed by Dell & Wainwright in 1935. [Architectural Press]

split in 1935 over Chermayeff's attitude towards Mendelsohn's increasing workload in Palestine. The situation was an interesting one. Mendelsohn fell in love with Palestine on his first visit. 'It would be much easier (to work in Palestine)', he wrote to Louise', than in England, more beautiful, because more creative'. 'The Orient' he wrote to her in another letter, 'resists the order of civilisation, being itself bound to the order of nature. That is why I am so strongly attached to it, trying to achieve a union between Prussianism and the lifestyle of the Muezzin. Between anti-nature and harmony with nature'.

On the strength of his early visits Mendelsohn rented an Arab windmill outside the walls of the old city (preserved as a monument to the architect today) and set up home and office in it. 'I am here as an English architect and I am reminded of our tears-and-Bach country only in bad dreams and in flashes of boundless ignominy'.

But, nevertheless, Mendelsohn was thinking of England during these frequent trips to Palestine ('between 1936 and 1939', his wife Louise said, 'he was practically commuting between the two', London and Jerusalem). 'What is happening to the London office?', he writes to Louise in December 1934 during the construction of Bexhill. 'Serge does not write and sends no plans for inspection', adding 'if the university and the Bank produce the commissions which are under consideration this will provide splendid work for our London office for over a year'.

But while Mendelsohn was working towards commissions in Palestine, including the Weizmann and Salman Schocken houses (with Hannes

House for Denis Cohen, 64 Old Church Street, Chelsea, London photographed by Dell & Wainwright in 1936. [Architectural Press]

The Bexhill Pavilion in c.1937. [RCHM England]

Schreiner and Birkin Haward), Chermayeff was left very much on his own to design the interiors of Bexhill (the restaurant, auditorium and library are certainly all his work) and to seek out private commissions. At this time he designed the Plan Furniture range as well as a corset showroom in London for the Weingarten brothers. Chermayeff wanted at least joint control of the projects in Palestine, but this is something that Mendelsohn would not allow him. Finally in March 1935, nine months before the completion and opening of Bexhill, Mendelsohn wrote to Louise 'The final argument with Serge came about. We parted in the awareness that each had found his own mark and sphere of activity'.

Mendelsohn moved his London office to an attic in Berkeley Square and then to Claridge House in Davies Street where he lived above shop, finally leaving England for good in June 1939. Despite his 'commuting' between London and Jerusalem, Mendelsohn still took an active part in London society. His fiftieth birthday in 1937 had been celebrated in style at the Athenaeum and in December 1937 he hosted a party at Davies Street which included Sir Charles Reilly, Eric Gill, Paul Nash, Sir John Rothenstein, and Henry Moore.

Inevitably many of Mendelsohn's English clients were Jewish. Yet the architect's greatest building was commissioned by a peer of the realm and by a deeply conservative South Coast borough council. The story of Bexhill Pavilion is altogether remarkable. Before telling it, it is best to look at the two houses Mendelsohn and Chermayeff designed in England.

Chermayeff, as has already been mentioned, received the commission for the Nimmo house sometime before Mendelsohn's arrival in England. Yet the house that emerged in the old orchard setting high up on a Buckinghamshire hill was a Mendelsohn design without question. The interiors owed far more to Chermayeff, except of course the great stair, the most attractive feature of the scheme. From the outside the Nimmo house was very severe. Indeed it resembled Middlesex County Council schools of the late 1940s and early 1950s rather than a comfortable country house. Severe in its geometry, the rectilinear plan was only broken by Mendelsohn's glazed stair turret. The walls were constructed from four-inch reinforced concrete and dressed in white render. Extensively glazed, this cross between an infants school and a sanatorium was, in fact, a very comfortable and well-lit house once visitors stepped inside.

Light, airy, panelled throughout in pale wood veneers, the interior was as warm as it was Modern. Chermayeff made effective use of mirrored walls, built-in cupboards and the latest work of talented young designers and furniture makers. There were rugs designed by Marion Dorn, a glass topped table by Denham Maclaren and an abstract design by John Skeaping for the face of a built-in sideboard. Mendelsohn's stair featured a delicate stainless steel balustrade topped with polished oak handrail. (The house has recently been bought by the architect Michael Aukeitt.)

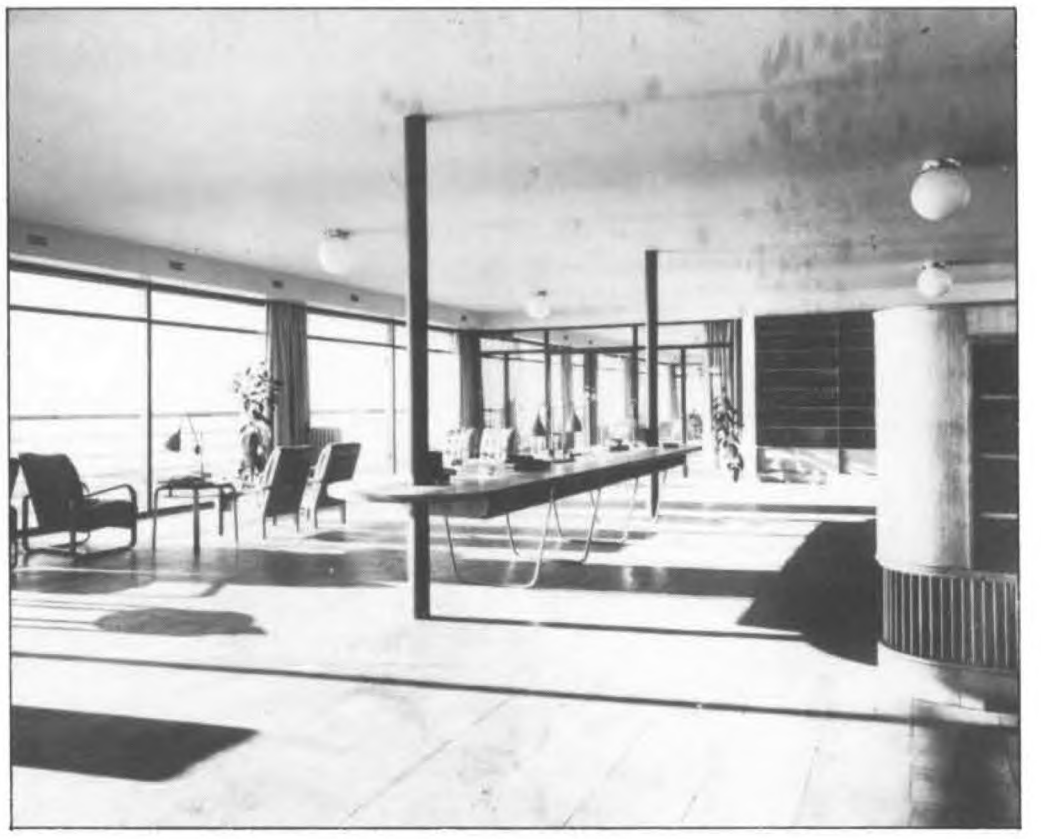
The Cohen house at 64 Old Church Street, Chelsea was a very different proposition and yet just as severe as the Nimmo house from the outside. This was one of two new houses in the Chelsea street. The other, next door, was designed by Walter Gropius and Maxwell Fry. They faced a range of delicate late eighteenth century Georgian terraced houses. Although there was much talk at the time of the new houses recalling the 'Georgian tradition', this argument was never convincing. In fact the Mendelsohn and Chermayeff house appeared distinctly unEnglish, a cold building that effectively turns its back on the street reserving its best side for the garden front. This was a private house for a private client and not a part of the tradition of English town houses.

The long strips of windows at the front of the house on the ground floor lit the extensive servants' quarters and the kitchen; those on the first floor fronted the servants' bedrooms and the hall. The raised block at the right-hand of the street elevation conceals a guest cloakroom on the ground floor and the principal bathroom behind shallow, pill-box windows. The garden front consists of strips of, more or less, continuous glazing on both floors, its rigid geometry broken only by the now fronted extension to the drawing room and the nautical railings of the first floor balcony.

The interior of what at first appears to be a small house is intriguing both for its scale and for the sheer volume of space given over to servants' accommodation. But most remarkable of all is the squash court dug in at basement level and, very much an integral part of the house, overlooked from the dining room. If any one house sums up the prevailing attitude towards the ideal of a healthy, sunbathing lifestyle charged with light and fresh air, then 64 Old Church Street is it. As with the Nimmo house the detailing of the interior was very much Chermayeff's province, particularly as in this case there was no dramatic, sweeping stair. Abounding with built-in cupboards, dressing tables, sideboards, wardrobes and showcases, Chermayeff has these finished in luxurious veneers, mahogany, birch, pear, and deal. Of the 'squash rackets court', the anonymous caption writer in the *Architectural Review* noted, 'this gave the opportunity for dramatic interior perspectives, but must have also raised difficult acoustic problems'. Sadly the house has been much altered since.

Mendelsohn clearly had his mind set on much larger, preferably public projects. The grandest of his unbuilt projects in England was a spectacular housing scheme proposed for an eighty acre site at White City in west London bounded by the Western Avenue, Wood Lane and Bloemfontein Road. Served by fast new motor roads as well as by the two Underground stations at Wood Lane, the White City site seemed an ideal situation for modern mass housing, a self-contained city within a city, connected to all existing parts, yet able to function alone. Mendelsohn proposed the construction of no less than 1,964 flats on the site, family housing located in a series of sinuous eight storey blocks, snaking north west to south east. At the centre of the scheme there was accommodation for single people and childless couples in six twelve storey towers. Three storey blocks of flats and shops would front the busy Western Avenue on the northern boundary. Perhaps Mendelsohn was thinking of the 'kibbutzim' when he drew in not only a 'kindergarten' on the plans, but also a one thousand-seater restaurant, a large open air swimming pool and even a power station. Clearly no local authority in Britain would commit itself to such a generous scheme and, of course, White City never left the drawing board.

Nevertheless it is important in showing how Mendelsohn saw the future. Would such housing be monotonous, inhumane he was asked? Brushing aside such suggestions the architect replied that such objections 'were as outmoded as knightly weapons used in the face of tanks'. But his own weapons were not powerful enough to get either this scheme or an, altogether more luxurious hotel project at Blackpool off the ground. The hotel project



Interiors of the Bexhill Pavilion in c.1937. [RCHM England]

envisaged two 120 foot towers, one a hotel, the other its attendant car park, rising above the sea front on an island site cut off by West Street, Church Street, Corporation Street and Market Street. Cars would race up a reinforced concrete spiral ramp to their sea view bays, while guests would gaze out across the Irish Sea from their steel and glass hotel, a dramatic precursor to many post-war office and hotel developments in Britain.

Although representative of dozens of schemes Mendelsohn dreamt up at this time, neither White City nor Blackpool had any chance of being built. But then the project at Bexhill-on-Sea must have seemed even more unlikely still. Yet with the help of the ninth Earl De La Warr one of the finest of England's pre-war Modern Movement buildings was funded and almost finished.

Earl De La Warr (1900-76) was an unusual man. Wealthy in his own right, he was nevertheless a conscientous objector at the age of eighteen, a Labour supporter as soon as he took his seat in the House of Lords in 1921, socialist Mayor of Bexhill from 1932 to 1935 and Chairman of the National Labour Party from 1931 to 1943. Bexhill was the least likely place that even the most optimistic architect could have been expected to win an commission in the 1930s, or in fact at any other time. Deeply conservative, long a home for retired military and civil servants, Bexhill was a red brick and terracotta gerontocracy. The story of how a dramatically modern building on its sea front, the work of foreign Jews came to be built is an extraordinary one.

In 1932 the Bexhill Corporation bought what was known as the 'coastguard site' for £28,000. It wanted a private developer to build a modern leisure complex to compete with the attractions of other south coast resorts. It was at this point that the new Mayor, Earl De La Warr stepped in. De La Warr convinced the council and the people of Bexhill that what they needed was an architectural competition to find the best possible architect for the new building. More than that the building must be undertaken by Bexhill itself and not by a private developer. 'My own view', said De La Warr, 'is that if it is going to pay private enterprise, it is going to pay the town'. Retired colonels and doughty civil servants could hardly disagree with the Earl's impeccable logic.

In April 1933 De La Warr arranged an open architectural competition. This was to be run by the RIBA who would appoint an assessor. The assessor was Thomas S. Tait, a choice almost guaranteed to ensure that the winner would be a Modern Movement architect, which, of course, is exactly what De La Warr wanted. Tait was a partner in a large and successful commercial practice. He was also a committed Modernist. Indeed as early as 1927 he had designed a development of Modern houses for the window manufacturer Crittal at Silver End, Essex. Details of the competition were released in September 1933. Mendelsohn had been in England just three months.

Tait's conditions make fascinating reading. 'No restriction on the style of architecture will be imposed but buildings must be light, simple in appearance and attractive, suitable for a holiday resort. Heavy stonework is not desirable'. 'The finish is left to the discretion of the competitor, but if cement finish is employed it must be such that it will not craze'. 'Modern steel-framed or ferro-construction may be adopted, but walls and roofs must be

insulated for heat and sound'. The brief, in short, could have been written for Mendelsohn. The competition deadline was 4th December 1933. There were 230 entries. Mendelsohn and Chermayeff sailed in first winning the premium of £150. Third prize went to the young William Crabtree, whose Peter Jones store at Sloane Square, Chelsea was to follow a few years later, a homage to Mendelsohn's Schocken stores in Germany.

Reaction to the winning design was inevitably mixed. On the whole the people of Bexhill were against it. Canvassed by the Daily Mirror, 'prominent local resident' Sir Duncombe Mann said 'I am no admirer of this Epstein stuff'. The editor of The *Bexhill Observer* wrote 'None of the sketches published so far (none in the *Observer* I am pleased to say) has been calculated to give a good impression. I really cannot believe that the beautiful and inspiring entertainment pavilion for which Bexley has waited so long, and which is set in a new style of seaside architecture, is going to look quite like any of these illustrations'.

A letter, meanwhile, quite clearly from the pen of an architect, was sent to the Town Clerk, together with a similar one published in *Fascist Week*, complaining of the employment 'of an alien architect for the erection of a building by a public body to the exclusion of a British architect'.

Cyril Sweet recalls that 'the design of the building was not to the liking of the local people and the idea of having foreign architects design the Pavilion in Bexhill was complete anathema to them' . . .

Nevertheless, De La Warr was able to increase the budget of £50,000 allocated to the Pavilion to £70,000 and work commenced as soon as possible. However even the extra £20,000 was insufficient to complete the scheme as Mendelsohn and Chermayeff designed it. Stringent economies in the design were essential if it was to be built. The swimming pool was axed altogether along with a twenty six foot statue of Persephone (a design by Frank Dobson) which was to gaze out across the chilly waters to Beachy Head. Set low against the horizon, the building presented a blank face to the red brick and terracota of Bexhill's existing sea front architecture. On its sea front it was glazed from one end to the other and given real drama by Mendelsohn's superb stair tower. By any standards it was an elegant building and did not really need critics like J. M. Richards to compare it to Regency seaside architecture. Above all it was a revolutionary building making extensive use of welded steel technology. 'Bexhill on Friday was a great joy', Mendelsohn wrote to Louise on the aeroplane back to Jerusalem in 1935. 'The main frame is finished and also a part already of the walls. The situation is first class: seen from the sea the building looks like a horizontal skyscraper which starts from its development from the auditorium. Seen from the street, it is a festive invitation. The interior is truly music. Lord De La Warr told me so: he was quite excited'.

The completed building with it interior attended to by Chermayeff while Mendelsohn was in Palestine was opened by the Duchess of York in December 1935. Her opening speech in the new auditorium was ominously interrupted by a sinister pounding on Chermayeff's spectacular coffered ceiling. Cyril Sweet was there at the time. 'The roof was of plastic covered corrugated iron with very little insulating value and the roof space was used as the extract from the air in the auditorium. This was the first occasion that the auditorium had been used and, because of the climatic conditions, there was a great deal of condensation on the underside of the corrugated roof which having reached a certain level fell on to the fibrous ceiling beneath making quite an alarming noise. No one had the slightest idea as to the cause. I was sitting next to Erich Mendelsohn and was despatched to ascertain the cause and returned able to reassured those present that there had been no major disaster'.

Since then far worse disasters have befallen Bexhill Pavilion. Its interiors have been systematically spoilt over the post war years. White plaster walls are now covered in hideous flock wallpaper. Modern chairs have given way to those normally reserved for old peoples' homes run on the cheap. Chermayeff's elegant library has been desecrated, turned into a 'multi-purpose room' (i.e. no purpose at all). Glazing bars have been allowed to rot, the sundecks (always optimistic) have been closed for a long time, while only Mendelsohn's spectacular stair remains untouched. Fortunately, Jill Theis, a local councillor, has set up a Pavilion Trust and helps to find the necessary funds to restore the Pavilion to its former glory.

Mendelsohn built so few buildings in England that it is shame to see them abused. This fate has already befallen both Bexhill Pavilion and the Cohen House. In Germany most of Mendelsohn's buildings were wilfully destroyed including the spectacular Schocken stores. We at least have Peter Jones, so heavily influenced by Mendelsohn, together with a clutch of inspired and generous post-war schools and the Royal Festival Hall which owed much to Bexhill. A century after his birth is time enough to begin looking after a unique Anglo-German heritage, an architecture that links the German Expressionist to the social architecture of 1950's England.

Bibliography

Arnold Whittick, *Erich Mendelsohn*, London, 1940 & 1956.

Wolf von Eckardt, *Erich Mendelsohn*, New York, 1960

Bruno Zevi, *Erich Mendelsohn*, Bologna, 1982, London, 1985

Peter Blundell Jones, Jeremy Brook, Charlotte Benton, Barbara Tilson and others, *Erich Mendelsohn 1887-1953* (catalogue to exhibition organised by 'Modern British Architecture'), London, 1987.

Its Heinze-Greenberg, Gilbert Herbert and others, *Erich Mendelsohn in Palestine* (exhibition catalogue), Haifa, 1987

Sigrid Achenbach, ed., *Erich Mendelsohn 1887-1953. Ideen, Bauten, Projekte* (exhibition catalogue), Berlin, 1987

Russell Stevens and Peter Willis, 'Earl de la Warr and the competition for the Bexhill Pavilion, 1933-34', in *Architectural History*, XXX, 1990, pp 135-166.