

## Raymond Unwin



Raymond was born in Rotherham on the 2<sup>nd</sup> November 1863. His father had a currier's shop on College Street, which was remembered with great affection years later. In 1871, the family moved from Clifton Bank to Moorgate Grove. Father and son studied at Oxford before Raymond moved north again to work as an apprentice engineer at the Staveley Iron and Coal Company near Chesterfield.

Sir Raymond Unwin

Inspired by the ideas of John Ruskin and William Morris, Raymond moved to Manchester in 1885, becoming Secretary of the local Socialist League. He wrote articles and spoke on street corners in support of the cause and became aware of the issue of housing through his friendship with Edward Carpenter. In 1896 he formed a partnership with his brother-in-law, Barry Parker, and together they worked on the design of houses in the Derbyshire mining villages. They favoured the simple vernacular style and made it their aim to improve standards of housing for the working class. In addition, they aimed to popularise the 'Art and Craft' movement, and to this end, wrote a book, 'The Art of Building a Home'.

Their first major planning task was to design, in 1902, the New Earswick Model Village, near York, for the Joseph Rowntree Trust. Experience gained was then applied on a larger scale at the first Garden City, founded at Letchworth in 1903. Unwin and Parker then followed this by designing Hampstead Garden Suburb, which was opened by King George V in 1907.

Unwin was a key advocate of a move away from the Bye-Law housing layouts and the adoption of national standards of house design, density and layout. He was a prolific writer and speaker and published such works as 'Town Planning in Practice' and 'Nothing Gained by Overcrowding'.

In 1913, he was amongst a group of twenty distinguished men who met together to create the Town Planning Institute, and, in 1915, became its second President. He became a member of the Government's Civil Service, first as Director of the Housing Branch of the Ministry of Munitions during the First World War; then as Chief Architect and later, Chief Technical Officer for Building and Town Planning. Two of his most important contributions were his involvement as a member of the Tudor Walters Committee on Housing, which reported in 1918; and the preparation of the Housing Manual, produced by the Ministry of Health in the same year. These formed the cornerstone of the Housing and Town Planning Act 1919 and

laid down standards of house design and layout which were to be applied for much of the twentieth century.

His work directly influenced men like Alderman George Caine and through him, housing developments in Rotherham. In Herringthorpe they were 'built and laid out, twelve to the acre, on garden city lines, artistically grouped, allowing of ample garden space and a maximum amount of fresh air and sunlight'.

Nationally opinions were divided on this move to a standard of twelve houses to the acre; opponents pointing to the massive inter war growth of the suburbs and 'ribbon development' as a natural consequence.

Although in later decades various amendments were made to Government housing standards, the influence of Sir Raymond Unwin and his colleagues and their original vision, can be seen in the development of the nearby Broom Valley Estate in 1950.