

FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT a talk by RAYMOND WHITTAKER

Raymond Whittaker, a local architect who studied at Cambridge under Sir Leslie Martin, designer of London's Festival Hall, recently gave a fascinating illustrated talk on Frank Lloyd Wright at our January monthly meeting.

Frank Lloyd Wright (1867-1959) is regarded as the foremost US architect of all time and is credited as the designer of nine World Heritage buildings, including the Guggenheim Museum in New York, Fallingwater, Robie House and Jacobs House in Wisconsin. Innovative, imaginative, independent and ingenious, Wright created several groundbreaking features which have now been adopted as characteristic of some of the mostly highly regarded modern buildings. Long, low profiles, open plan, incorporating the outside space with a building's interior spaces and using cantilevering to provide exciting structures are all hallmarks of his designs.

Venturesome, determined and driven, Wright had an early fascination with 3D shapes by playing with a set of 'Froebel Gifts' which lay behind his subsequent career. Starting by working for Adler and Sullivan in Chicago, he married in 1889 and was determined to build his own house, borrowing money to create Oak Park, subsequently extended, in a style known as 'prairie' houses with strong horizontal designs and using natural materials.

Between 1908 and 9 he worked on his next commission: Robie House with a steel frame, Roman style bricks, the living and dining rooms upstairs to benefit from the extra light and a 'hidden' front door for privacy. Even the furniture was designed to blend into the overall pattern. Such ideas became hallmarks of Wright's designs and are features still incorporated by many modern architects.



Robie House



Jacobs House

Similar characteristics may be seen in a subsequent design for the rather more egalitarian Jacobs House. Wright had by now developed new projects: the Usonian focus and his scheme for educating students and at the same time gaining their free labour: the Taliesin Fellowship.

One of the most iconic buildings of Wright draws many visitors each year. The integration of the inside and outside space and use of cantilevering are well illustrated in Fallingwater, also designed in 1937. Astonishingly, his complex design took only 2 hours to create.



Fallingwater



Raymond also touched on the private life of Frank Lloyd Wright which was quite tumultuous. He seems to have been a driven person without a great deal of patience.

Prompting a range of questions from the attentive audience, Raymond's talk was very well received and generated much applause.

Also, as previously mentioned, this meeting was the last at which Beryl Armstrong organised the refreshments. We thank Beryl and her team most sincerely for their very welcome contribution and help. Indeed, with a power outage bringing Raymond's PowerPoint to an abrupt halt, the team seamlessly brought the refreshments forward and filled a potentially very awkward gap. We have had one volunteer willing to help with refreshments in future, but we do need more volunteers to help with this task. If you are willing to help, please email Josie Dunlop at pnlu3achair@gmail.com or phone 01768 892690 to speak to her.