

Manzoni, Herbert John Baptista 1899 - 1972



Herbert John Baptista Manzoni [also known as Herbert John Baptista Manzoni and as H. J. Manzoni] has been described as the man who "put a concrete collar round Birmingham". He was born in Birkenhead, Cheshire, England on 21 March 1899 and trained as a civil engineer at Liverpool University. He then worked as assistant to the Borough Engineer of Birkenhead. In 1923 he moved to Birmingham to take up the post of engineer and architect in the Sewers and Rivers Section of the Public Works Department. In 1935 he was appointed City Engineer and Surveyor. Photographs of housing designed by him about this time on the Wesley Castle Estate and Rushmoor Farm, Birmingham are illustrated in *The Book of the Modern House*, edited by Patrick Abercrombie (1939 p. 165).

Following World War Two Manzoni was responsible for the wholesale redevelopment of Birmingham. This involved the clearance of some 30,000 dwellings and the creation of five new housing areas. It also involved the building of a new ring road and the demolition of the Market Hall at the Bull Ring, the Central Library, Mason Science College and the Central Technical College. As it meant the removal of many of what are now considered to be fine Victorian and earlier buildings, this has subsequently come under much criticism. Stacey Barnfield in his online article 'Sir Herbert Manzoni: The man who changed the face of Birmingham' (2013) commented that Manzoni "was a man whose name sends shivers down the spines of conservationists" and that "he brought more damage to the city than the Luftwaffe could only ever dream of."

Nevertheless, despite the criticism, Manzoni was knighted for his services in 1954, and was awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Science Degree from Birmingham University in 1961. He became President of the Institute of Civil Engineers in 1960 and retired in 1963. He died on 18 November 1972

Worked in

UK

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‘Post-war kitchen: proposal for large-family municipal house, exhibited by Birmingham Public Works Department’. Architect & Building News 16 July 1943 pp.36-37 [Designed by H. J. Manzoni]

Links

- BusinessLive. Stacey Barnfield. ‘Sir Herbert Manzoni: The man who changed the face of Birmingham’

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- Wikipedia https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herbert_Manzoni

- Moseley Society <http://moseley-society.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/MP1-Manzoni.pdf>

- BirminghamLive. Carl Chinn. ‘Change came fast with Herbert Manzoni’
<https://www.birminghammail.co.uk/news/nostalgia/carl-chinn-change-came-fast-3904203>