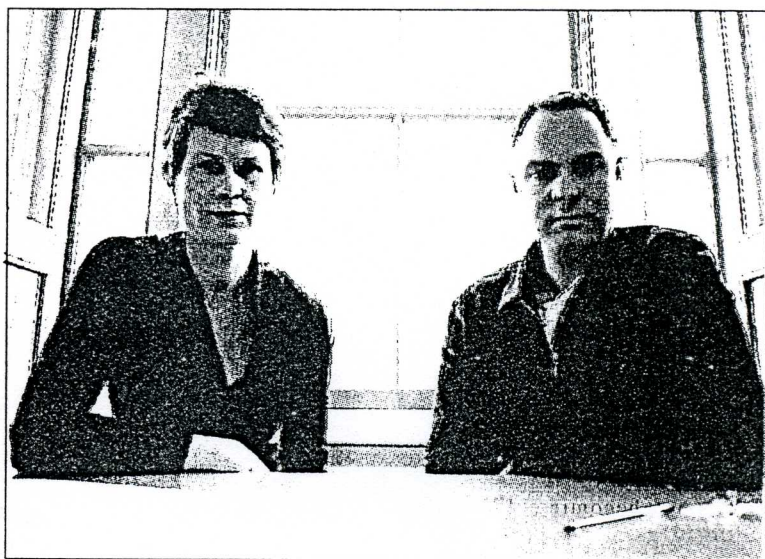
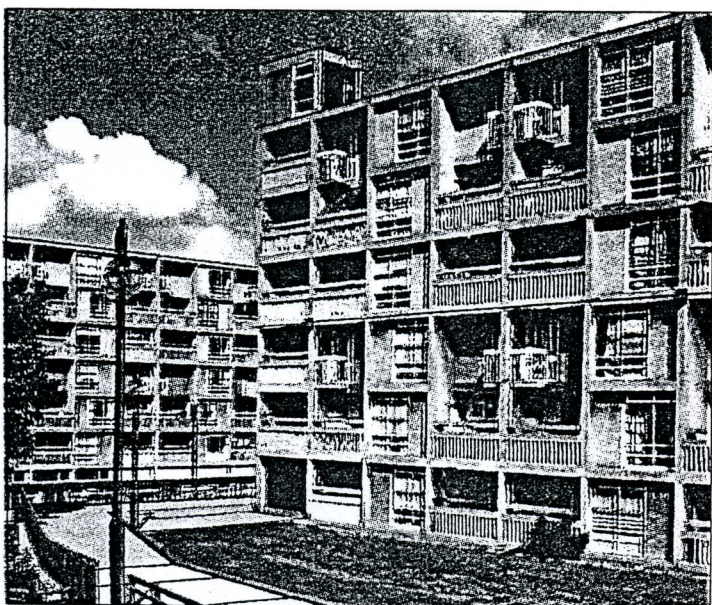


Professor's taste for the high life



Prof Jeremy Till and partner Prof Sarah Wigglesworth

THE new head of Sheffield University's School of Architecture is a man of distinctive taste – particularly when it comes to choosing a home.

Jeremy Till is one of the most respected innovators in his field. But his decision to apply for a flat in the controversial Park Hill tower block has left his colleagues shaking their heads in disbelief.

"I've often come up to Sheffield and seen these buildings and thought they were fantastic," said Prof Till. "After I was appointed I rang the council and put my name on the waiting list. I could've lived anywhere in Sheffield, so it was a positive choice on my part."

His wish was granted three weeks ago when he was handed the keys to a flat on the eighth floor of the recently-Listed Grade II* building, with panoramic views of the city from his bedroom.

"It's amazing – I can even see my office. On an urban scale I think the flats work magnificently as a backdrop for the skyscape of Sheffield.

By LESLEY DRAPER

They are quite generous and well designed, although there have been problems with the waste disposal units," he admitted.

Despite its official listing, Prof Till does not see the building as "precious" in the way its fashionable London counterparts have become, though he can see definite potential.

"The housing officers I've spoken to don't seem nearly as gloomy about it as the public perception suggests. But, it will be interesting, now it's listed, to see what the council do with it."

His move has been greeted with something between amusement and bewilderment by colleagues at the university. But Prof Till is not daunted by their reaction.

"They're kind of curious and some think I'm slightly ill-informed. I'm not saying I'm a pioneer, but one of the things architects have thrown at them is that they design these things

and then live in Georgian houses."

That's certainly not an accusation that could be levelled at Prof Till and his partner, fellow architect and university professor Sarah Wigglesworth, whose London home is currently a caravan on a railway-side building site in Islington.

The two – affectionately known as the dynamic duo – have invested £400,000 in building a dream house, using straw (as insulation) and other sustainable materials including recycled concrete rubble, sandbags of sand/cement mixture and a grass roof.

The so-called 'straw house' – still unfinished, hence the caravan dwelling – has attracted considerable attention in the architectural world and its progress is to be featured on Channel 4's *Grand Designs* series, which started this week.

But it is far from being a mere experiment: "It's all our life savings; our angst; our emotion. Everything has gone into this house and it's lurching from mini-crisis to mini-crisis.

"But it's going to be finished – we're planning a millennium party to celebrate. And yes, it's going to be pretty funny coming up to Park Hill during the week after that," said Prof Till.

One of his aims as head of the School of Architecture is to forge strong links with the city and ensure that the university is not seen as an ivory tower. His impressions of Sheffield and its architecture certainly sound like a strong foundation to build on.

"It's a fantastic city – not pretty in the traditional sense, but it's got a lot of opportunities, like the National Centre for Popular Music. Although some people may not like it, you couldn't put that building in many other cities, but Sheffield is tough enough to take it."

And Prof Till, evidently, is tough enough to take to Park Hill flats. So is there any drawback to his high-rise home?

"Well, the lifts are a bit smelly..."