

## Oxford Dictionary of National Biography

**Tyrwhitt, (Mary) Jaqueline [Jacky]** (1905–1983), *town planner and educator*

by Ellen Shoshkes

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**Tyrwhitt, (Mary) Jaqueline [Jacky]** (1905–1983), town planner and educator, was born on 24 May 1905 in Pretoria, Transvaal, the eldest child of Thomas Tyrwhitt (1874–1956), architect, and his wife, Dorothy Nina, *née* Marsden (c.1883–1938). Her parents had moved in 1904 to southern Africa where Thomas Tyrwhitt worked for the public works department. From 1907 the family resided at 3 Pilgrim's Lane, Hampstead, London, where Jaqueline lived with her younger siblings, Robert, Cuthbert, Edrica, and Alicia. She began studying at St Paul's Girls' School, Hammersmith, in 1918. Her father having decided that she was to pursue a career in garden design, Jaqueline spent a fifth year at St Paul's preparing for the general horticultural examination of the Royal Horticultural Society. In September 1924 she joined the first-year class at the Architectural Association (AA) school, and then worked as an apprentice gardener under Ellen Willmott at her Warley Place estate in Essex.

In search of more meaningful work, Tyrwhitt took an evening course at the London School of Economics, and between 1931 and 1935 she was employed as an organizer for the League of Industry, formerly the National Council of Industry and Commerce, which had been established in 1930 to advocate a non-partisan, technocratic approach to government. In 1936 Tyrwhitt lived and worked at Dartington Hall, near Totnes, Devon, the experimental estate established by Leonard and Dorothy Elmhirst. Here she read *Cities in Evolution* (1915) by the social evolutionist and city planner Patrick Geddes. The book inspired her to study town planning, and a lifelong interest in Geddes ensued. Tyrwhitt was particularly attracted to Geddes's application of biological metaphors to explain the evolution of cities, and his call for an ecological approach to studying people and place ('place, work, folk'). In studying the past and present life of a city, Geddes sought to demonstrate a city's potential and so inspire citizens to bring about this desired future. It was an approach to which Tyrwhitt was drawn and contributed throughout her career. In 1937 she enrolled in the School of Planning and Research for National Development (SPRND), recently founded at the AA by E. A. A. Rowse, a follower of Geddes. Tyrwhitt completed her course in 1939, shortly before the closure of the SPRND. Following the declaration of war she joined the Women's Land Army forestry service and was posted to the New Forest.

In February 1941 Tyrwhitt returned to London to direct the Association for Planning and Regional Reconstruction (APRR), which Rowse had formed—with support from James Forrester, Viscount Grimston—as a non-profit organization to carry on the research of the SPRND into post-war reconstruction. The association's agenda

included regional planning, industry, agriculture and nutrition, population, housing and recreation, health, and education. It also devised techniques for the analysis and presentation of survey data as maps and reports for the education of officials and the general public. Tyrwhitt's use of transparent overlays to create thematic maps was a forerunner of modern planning practice. From late 1941 she codified these methods in a correspondence course in town planning for those serving in the armed forces. In order to run this course on behalf of the War Office, she reorganized Rowse's pre-war school for national development as the School of Planning and Research for Regional Development, an arm of the APRR. She was also asked by the Town Planning Institute to prepare the post-war completion course for those who, having taken the correspondence course, would seek professional certification.

In early 1945 Tyrwhitt was sent to North America by the Ministry of Information to lecture on town planning in post-war Britain. This proved to be a life-changing experience and, inspired by a meeting with the former Bauhaus teacher László Moholy-Nagy, she returned to Britain with a new appreciation of the need for planning to be creative and to incorporate the principles of good design. In London she became more active in the International Federation of Housing and Town Planning and the Modern Architectural Research (MARS) Group, the British branch of the Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne (CIAM).

Tyrwhitt's new internationalism was evident in the selections she made in her edited collection, *Patrick Geddes in India* (1947), composed of excerpts drawn from the town planning reports Geddes had prepared for Indian cities between 1915 and 1919. Her aim was to demonstrate the practical application of Geddes's principles for urban reconstruction, highlighting the importance of diagnosis before treatment (survey before plan), conservative surgery (rehabilitation rather than removal), and the inseparability of people and place ('place, work, folk'). She also extended the international range of the APRR's information service and its library. At the conclusion of the completion course in town planning, which ran throughout 1947, Tyrwhitt left the SPRRD following the return of Rowse from military service. By the time of her departure she had trained a small but influential cohort of planners—among them Percy Johnson-Marshall, Eduard Sekler, and John F. C. Turner—who later made significant contributions to post-war reconstruction.

In 1948 Tyrwhitt was appointed to a teaching post at the New School for Social Research, New York, while also finishing work on an abridged version of Geddes's *Cities in Evolution* (1949) on behalf of the APRR. Back in England she completed the *Town and Country Planning Textbook* (1950)—the first student guide to planning published in Britain—which she cast as a synthesis of Geddes's triad—'place, work, folk'—and CIAM's four-part functionalist doctrine of living, working, developing mind and body, and circulating. Her commitment to Geddes's concept of bio-regionalism in turn guided members of CIAM to a better appreciation of the social aspects of urban planning and design.

During her first visit to North America, Tyrwhitt had met Sigfried Giedion, the Swiss architectural historian and general secretary of CIAM, with whom she subsequently

worked closely as a translator and editor of the eight books he published in English between 1951 and 1970. In the late 1940s she acted as an intermediary between Giedion and members of the MARS group in planning CIAM's first international summer school and took a leading role in organizing the 8th CIAM Congress, which MARS hosted in July 1951. Tyrwhitt also wrote the companion book, *CIAM 8: Heart of the City* (1953), in which she introduced her concept of 'urban constellation', the organization of cities, towns, and villages around a 'vital city center' composed of 'a great diversity of people' (quoted in Shoshkes, 142). Tyrwhitt foresaw the urban constellation as a means to inhibit suburban sprawl, as a corrective to the decline of central cities, and as an alternative to unregulated land development or the decentralization inherent in the garden city model.

Between 1951 and 1955 Tyrwhitt was a visiting professor at the University of Toronto where she established a postgraduate programme in town planning—Canada's first—and where she collaborated with the philosopher Marshall McLuhan on an interdisciplinary study of communications. In 1953–4 Tyrwhitt took leave of absence from Toronto to serve as director of the first United Nations seminar on housing and community improvement in Asia and the Far East, held in New Delhi in January 1954, and as UN adviser to the Indian government on the concurrent 'International Exhibition on Low Cost Housing'. Tyrwhitt was the first woman to lead a UN technical assistance project. In the following year she became the first full-time female member of Harvard University's Graduate School of Design where she taught for fourteen years and helped to create the first degree programme in urban design in the United States. As a teacher Tyrwhitt sought to establish collaborations between planners and architects. Her achievement was the development of an international network of scholars and practitioners who shared an interest in a humanistic, ecological approach to urban planning and design. At Harvard she also played a major role in establishing the first School of Planning in Asia, at Bandung, Indonesia, in 1960, which was a partnership between the university and the UN.

While in India Tyrwhitt met the Greek planner Constantinos Doxiadis with whom she shared an interest in establishing a theory and international practice of community development. In 1951 she launched an information service to support the far-flung staff of Doxiadis's international consulting firm, as well as the growing number of UN consultants working in the developing world. In 1957 this bulletin became the journal *Ekistics*—Doxiadis's term for a science of human settlements—which Tyrwhitt edited or co-edited until her death. She later devised a computerized information service to support the new discipline of ekistics. From 1961 she worked each summer for Doxiadis in Athens, serving as general secretary to the annual Delos symposia between 1963 and 1972, which helped build support for UN conferences on the environment and human settlements.

On retiring from Harvard in 1969, Tyrwhitt worked for Doxiadis full-time, travelling abroad periodically as a consultant or to teach. In this period she also supervised the construction of a house for herself at Sparoza, overlooking the Mesogeio plain. Much of her time was spent creating a drought-tolerant garden at Sparoza, which she described in a book that was published posthumously as *Making a Garden on a*

*Greek Hillside* (1998). Jaqueline Tyrwhitt died at Sparoza on 21 February 1983. Since 1994 her former residence has been the home of the Mediterranean Garden Society.

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**Archives** Benaki Museum, Athens, Doxiadis MSS · ETH, Zurich, Institute for the History and Theory of Architecture (gta), Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne MSS · Ford Foundation, New York · Harvard U., Harvard Design School, Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne MSS · NL Scot., corresp. and papers, Geddes MSS · RIBA · U. Cal., Berkeley, Bancroft Library, Catherine Bauer Wurster MSS · U. Edin. L., Patrick Geddes Centre for Planning Studies · University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, corresp. and papers, Geddes MSS

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Ellen Shoshkes, 'Tyrwhitt, (Mary) Jaqueline (1905–1983)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2014  
[<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/106752>, accessed 20 Jan 2015]

(Mary) Jaqueline Tyrwhitt (1905–1983): doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/106752