



Richard Wiseman – a self-portrait encapsulating three of his major interests: grandchildren, photography, and the architectural order of Greek columns

Richard Wiseman

1951 - 2022

LUCY WISEMAN

Richard was born in St George's Hospital at Hyde Park Corner and grew up in the tall-windowed terraces of Chelsea, a very different townscape from Hampstead Garden Suburb.

His childhood was not particularly easy. It wasn't long after the war, London was still pockmarked with bomb sites, housing and money were both in short supply and the family lived in flat conversions in the red-brick Edwardian terraces off the King's Road. He spent his school holidays at the V&A, roaming, surprised and delighted by the extent of human artistry and ingenuity. He had lifelong interests in science, exploration and the arts, became a skilled and talented painter and photographer, an enthusiastic traveller, and was fascinated by the measurement of time, amassing a significant collection of timepieces.

His formal education was less inspiring, despite sharing a maths teacher with Tim Berners-Lee.

His primary education was at the Marlborough – a forbidding Victorian and asphalt pile in Sloane Avenue – and later he took the erratic number 22 bus to Emmanuel School in Battersea – like Henrietta Barnett school, voluntary aided, though now a public school. Emmanuel was one of the better non-fee-paying schools in the area but he failed to thrive there, possibly because, having been born in mid-August, he was the youngest in his class in a school which sat most public exams a year early. Failing to get the grades for university at the close of the swinging sixties, his summer outdoor clerking job at his father's solicitor's Dickensian offices in the churchyard of St Paul's Covent Garden resulted in five year articles.

Those five years gave him his wings, a soaring confidence in his skills and abilities, and lifelong friendships. So when the firm couldn't afford to keep him on after he qualified he wandered down the road to the Strand and a job in Shell's legal team. His career there was stellar, but not really relevant here.

Meanwhile, we had married. It took three years and a baby to lure Richard to North West London: dull by his architectural standards but a place of friendship and community. We spent three years in Melbourne where he honed his contract writing skills on submarine pipelines and climbed the corporate ladder. Then came the move to Hampstead Garden Suburb. He developed an interest in the legal aspects of the estate and planning and delighted in the architecture.

He took early retirement from Shell and was soon invited by Angus Walker to join the Trust where he chaired the council for six years between 2013 and 2019. In the words of the Trust's

architectural advisor, David Davidson, who reminded me of the details of his tenure and his management skills:

"Richard understood and appreciated the Suburb and knew why it deserved the protection of the Trust. As Chair, he was a warm and kind presence, endlessly patient and encouraging, steering the organisation through some difficult times with immense good sense and authority. The staff enjoyed his regular visits to the office, always offering sound advice and good humour and taking the time to talk to everyone. He was instrumental in arranging the transfer of Central Square to the Trust from Barnet. He convinced his colleagues that the Trust would be a better long-term custodian for the centrepiece of the Suburb, managing it for the benefit of all residents and significantly improving its appearance. Richard left the Trust on a sound financial footing and much enriched by his contribution. We will remember him as an inspirational chair and a wise and humorous man."

Richard's relatively early death has been devastating for his family. Our final project was our 'lockdown garden' designed by Stephen Crisp who we were introduced to by Richard Townley as a result of the Central Square project. It became a place of relaxation, comfort and happiness as his life drew to a close.

His greatest delight though, and the achievement of which he was most proud, was his family: our three children Sam, Rebecca and Jonathan, and their children Adam, Laurie, Dov, Beatrice and Zev. He was entirely grateful that all three of the children were happily partnered and able to support themselves whilst realising the primacy of family life.

That he enriched so many lives and strengthened the organisations he supported is a legacy which would have satisfied him.

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RON FINLAY

The 2023 Proms at St Jude's Music and Literary festival runs from 24 June to 2 July and there are lots of opportunities to join us and help out. You'll meet new people, make new friends, and be doing something worthwhile for Hampstead Garden Suburb and the wider community.

We need enthusiastic and capable volunteers to help with catering and stewarding during the festival. Or join one of a range of committees working year round to put on the festival. They cover everything from education and fund-raising to music planning, social media and logistics.

We want you to enjoy your volunteering experience and will

try to match you with a task you would be happy to participate in.

Whatever time commitment you can offer us and whatever your skills, there will be something you can do to help us make Proms 2023 a fun, enjoyable and inclusive event.

Now is the time to apply. Please go to www.promsatstjude.org.uk/volunteering to register.



Proms volunteers
(Photo: Michael Eleftheriades)