

Cyril Winskell MBE, FRIBA, FRSA

Cyril Winskell was born in North Shields in August 1932, over a pub where his father was the publican. He was educated and practised as an architect on Tyneside throughout his working life. During his career he also sketched and painted the places he visited and recorded his ideas in a multitude of diagrams, as he called them. He was baptised in Christ Church, North Shields and was married there, to Patricia and they had 5 children; Cy, Scott, Patricia and twins Dave and Mark. Later in his career he became the Quinquennial Inspection Architect for Christ Church, and indeed his career developed into an interest and concern for the conservation of buildings.

He told a story about being encouraged by his father to take a job in a bank on Grey Street. The Bank Manager at the interview worked out that he wasn't interested in banking and asked what he really wanted to do; when he said 'be an architect' the manager told him to follow his dream. He did so, studying architecture at Newcastle University.

He was posted to Christmas Island during his National Service.

I met Cyril when I joined the Napper Partnership for my first job after University and he became a mentor – someone to ask advice on an issue or awkward matter, and he was a good friend and professional colleague for over 50 years. Always self-effacing but shrewd, he was generous with his time and involved himself with many organisations, charitable bodies and professional activities. Awarded the MBE in 1983, he was a Fellow of the RIBA and Royal Society of Arts.

In a long career he was involved in major restoration projects in Newcastle and Liverpool. Working for several local practices including Nappers, Couves, Barnett Winskell, Greenall Winskell Kish, he launched his own practice, Cyril Winskell, in 1971 before finally transferring his business interests and current project portfolio in 2014 to xsite architecture. His ideas were behind the restoration of the St Thomas's area in Newcastle and he also wrote the report about the townscape of the Canning Street Conservation Area in Liverpool for English Heritage following the Toxteth riots in 1982. This cemented his reputation as a Conservation Architect.

He was a member of the Urban Design Panel of the Grainger Town City Centre Partnership until it ended in 2003 and he continued to retain the role of Inspecting Architect for a number of churches in that area. As an Accredited Conservation architect, he lectured on what part the past and present use of historic buildings plays in their conservation, as illustrated by his work at the Tyneside Cinema and Jesmond Towers in Newcastle. For the Tyneside Cinema he was commissioned to prepare the conservation plan which included matching modern paint colours to old – which led to a decade of regeneration work.

From an early age he produced a stream of sketches, capturing the place he was visiting, including painting abstracts in the style of Ben Nicholson. Fascinated by the culture and traditions of the North East, he would refer to Lee Hall's popular play 'The Pitman Painters' in which Ben Nicholson features as the young man who baffles most of the hobby painters with his 'circles and squares'. He also acknowledged the influence of his art teacher, Harry Stephenson, at South Shields Boys' Grammar School. 'He had a big influence on me because he taught art, history and also touched on architecture.'

[This link](#) provides a special record of his art and architecture which was assembled for an exhibition of his work in aid of St Oswald's Hospice, at St George's Church Hall in 2016, which celebrated his 50-year career.

Professionally, his extra curriculum activities covered a range of appointments and activities: Chairman of RIBA North (1980-82), President of Northern Architecture Association (1990-93), leading a working group developing Cityscape ideas in conjunction with Newcastle City Council – many of which have been fulfilled with big improvements to the city as a consequence. He was influential in the success of Grainger Town 1997-2003 and wrote the Grainger Town Shopfront Design Guide. Also, a Committee Member of Europa Nostra he and his wife Patricia would regularly attend their Conferences in European Cities of Culture and Heritage to debate conservation and environmental issues and enjoy the fellowship of like-minded professionals.

In addition, he found time to devote much energy, and a massive contribution as Vice Chairman, to the Newcastle Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC). His wide experience serviced the Committee well and he would always have a sketch book in his pocket on the Annual DAC Tours. Bishop Martin recalls "his devotion to St James, Benwell, and the people there. Despite the terrible condition of the church and the fact there was no money to do very much in that deprived part of the City, ... and that Cyril was able to make a little go a very long way – almost singlehandedly he managed to restore the grave of one of my predecessors, Bishop Lloyd, in the churchyard at St James, Benwell".

Cyril was also persuaded by Bishop Martin, when he was Chairman of the Governing Body of St Chad's College, Durham, to work on some ambitious building projects which made a lasting contribution to the life of the College. Bishop Martin goes on to say: "... and in the Church Hall at St George's, Jesmond (where he was such a faithful member) after refreshments following a confirmation service Cyril was to be found in the kitchen, tea towel in hand, doing the washing up. The last person to leave. No task too great or small for him ..." A fitting epitaph for Cyril.

Geoffrey Purves

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Cyril Winskell, born August 1932, died 28th April 2020, aged 87