

Derrick John Woolf

Architect, Editor and Coleridgean

(6th January 1926 – 30th April 2017)

DERRICK WAS, FOR 15 YEARS UNTIL 2007, the Custodian of Coleridge Cottage in Lime Street, Nether Stowey. There he welcomed visitors to the National Trust Property with enthusiasm and humour.

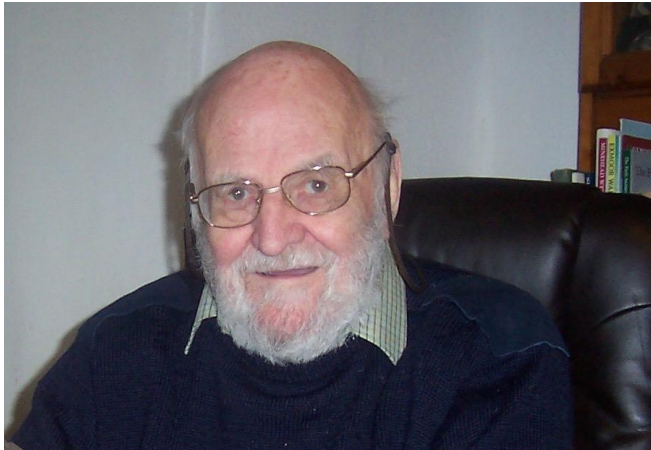
His busy and energetic sojourn was in retirement from a career in architecture begun after RAF service as a Navigator in India at the end of WW2 followed by several years in sanatoria recovering from TB.

As a young architect Derrick had designed the cantilevered viewing platforms over the Thames for the Festival of Britain. He had worked for the LCC and the firm Chamberlain, Powell and Bonn who were strongly influenced by Le Corbusier.

During a period working for the John Harris practice, he had designed and done drawings for

Their first major achievement [which] was winning RIBA's international competition for the design and supervision of Doha's new State Hospital in 1952. Their design was chosen for its intelligent approach to climate and environmental concerns which was advanced thinking in [the]1950s.¹

The beauty and perfection of Derrick's drawings relied on his own skills; his talent understated. Such skills are now superseded by software.



After they became one of the winners of another design competition for housing, he partnered with a colleague to set up the practice of Marsh and Woolf in London, where he had been born and remained until retirement.

Then, during a few years in a cottage at Penselwood, he joined the

¹ Len Chapman at <http://www.dubaiasitusedtobe.com/pagesnew/JohnHarrisMasterPlanner.shtml>

Dillington poets where he began editing the group's magazine and learned of the vacancy for the Custodianship at the National Trust property of Coleridge Cottage.

At the cottage, as well as opening to the public, he encouraged interest in Coleridge in the young by visiting the local schools and organising an annual children's art exhibition.

He spent many enjoyable years, collaborating with Reggie Watters, the then Chairman of the FoC, to give talks and design walking leaflets based on Coleridge and his circle at Nether Stowey. He produced these on a typewriter and photocopier. He attended and contributed to the various Coleridge Conferences, notably creating several panels to display examples of illustrated versions of the Ancient Mariner to flank the sides of the corridor to the hall at Kilve Court. He took these panels to display at Greta Hall when there was an appeal to purchase it.

With Reggie and Tom Mayberry—who became the next Chairman—he helped launch the effective appeal to open the upstairs rooms in Coleridge Cottage, writing many letters to raise sponsorship.

Derrick also built up a substantial collection of Coleridge books, most of which the Friends purchased when he left Coleridge Cottage, and some of which are intended to join an eventual book display there.

Additionally, he continued to edit a successful poetry magazine, *Odyssey* (set up in 1990) and, under its imprint, published and launched a good number of collections of promising young poets many of whom went on to wider recognition. This included putting on poetry readings at the cottage. Concurrently, he set up and edited 20 editions of a poetry review magazine *PQR* (*Poetry Quarterly Review*). The acumen and energy he showed in architecture he re-assigned to poetry.

As well as writing to contributors and typing up manuscripts, there was printing, photocopying, collating, stapling and posting—all by hand until he embraced the new technology of a computer.

His life changed in 2000 when, on his return from a visit to New Zealand he began to have memory difficulties that prevented him carrying through activities and managing day-to-day tasks. After he retired (again!) from Coleridge Cottage, we moved to a harbour-side flat in Minehead where Derrick could sit and watch the changing seascape and grumblingly participate in local community groups. Self-taught on the piano, he played by ear which he continued to do as long as he was able, as well as enjoying listening to music.

He began to need more and more care until November 2016, after a stroke, he lost the ability to stand and was taken into a Nursing Home for the last few months of his life which ended on April 30th, 2017.

I am privileged to have shared with and had my experience enhanced by him in the period at Coleridge Cottage and subsequent times. He never lost his visual sense, architectural/art knowledge and love of Coleridge.

Tilla Brading