

John Worthington

Born 1938.

Notes on a life in three parts.

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1. Learning

1938. Born Ealing, London. Early years in India.



1952 – 56 Gresham School, Holt Norfolk. Summers sailing, Burnham on Crouch..



1957 – 59 National Service, Royal Norfolk Regiment basic training. 2nd Lieutenant Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, Spandau, Berlin pre the wall, Wuppertal, Germany.

1959 – 60 Architecture, NE Essex Polytechnic, Walthamstow.



1960 – 64 Architectural Association, London AA Dip (Hons).

Ministry of Housing. Danilo Dolci, Partenico, Sicily. Holloway Travel Scholarship (Europe).

1964 – 65 Alex Gordon & Partners – IBIS (Industrialised steel housing).



Louis Kahn, Ezra Ehrenberg with John, and Christopher Alexander.

1965 – 67 Commonwealth Fund, Harkness Fellowship. University of Pennsylvania, M. Arch (Penn). Travel throughout USA and Canada. University of California, Berkeley (Christopher Alexander).

1967 – 69 Work experience in Vancouver Canada. Travel to Japan, Hong Kong, Cambodia, India, Nepal, Afghanistan.



John, Sue and Nick Worthington.

1969 – 71 Work, teaching, homemaking. Orchard Road London N6. ABK (Ahrends, Burton & Koralek) Basildon Housing Consultant: Home Office (briefing, Police and Fire services). Teaching: AA, Canterbury.

2. Practising

1970 – 1982: DEGW, rethinking research, design and delivery. London office established with Frank Duffy (right) for JFN Associates (70-74). US space planners with offices in Brussels. Consulting: IBM (Finland), Ministry of Public Building and Works, Port of London Authority. Briefing, space planning and design for Burton's, Amex, Unipart (British Leyland). JFN into receivership (US 73).



DEGW established (DLGW till Peter Eley joined in 1976). Concepts: Space use, evaluation (Shell, Services, Scenery, Settings) & management (Facilities Newsletter). Research based design: Digital Europe HQ (Geneva); BNFL HQ, Warrington (Building concept design); Wiggins Teape, Basingstoke. Consulting and publications: DOE/Hackney and Islington *Reuse of Industrial Buildings for New Enterprises* (with URBED). *Planning Office Space* Duffy Cave Worthington (76) *Industrial Rehabilitation* Eley Worthington (79).

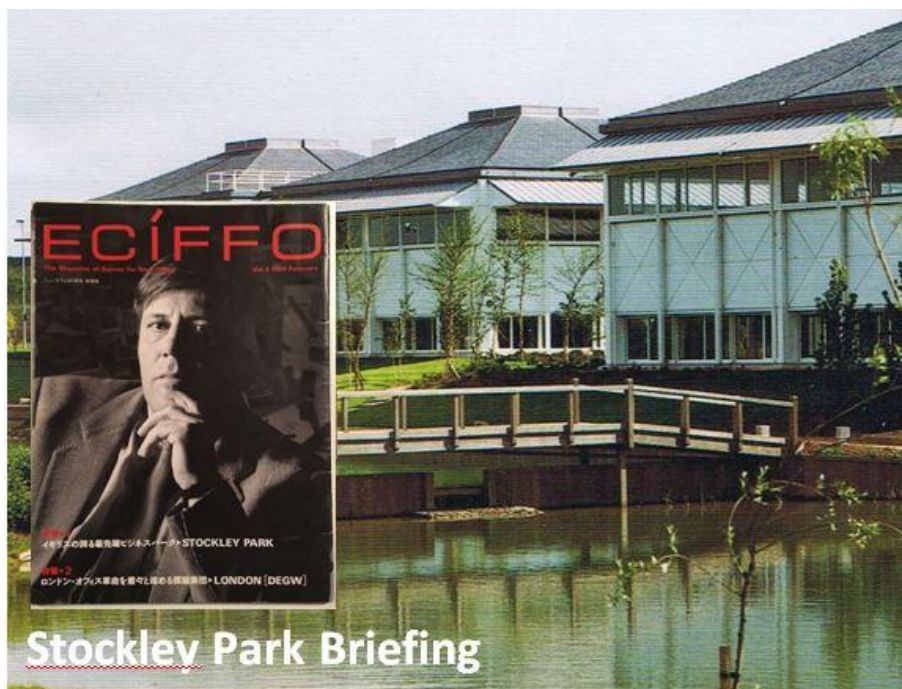


1982- 1992: Growing an international business from understanding the workplace. Consulting: Tenant profiles and building appraisal - Cutlers Gardens (London 82); Barclays branch studies; European premises guidelines, Digital, Hewlett Packard, IBM. Interiors – Ernst and Young HQ, Wang, La Rinascente (Milan).

Multi-Client Studies: Orbit1 (UK), Orbit 2 (US) Impact of Information & Communications Technology (ICT) on office real estate and design.

Competition winner: Stockley Park master plan (1984).

1985: 250 staff across Europe. Offices, Glasgow, Milan, Madrid, Paris. Consulting: North America, Mexico, Japan.



User research, site and building briefing, interior concepts: Broadgate (City of London) *Eleven contemporary office buildings compared*. Stockley Park (Heathrow) *Meeting the needs of modern industry*.

Space utilization studies: Health (DHSS), Trafalgar House Business Parks. Urban development strategies: Merchant City (Glasgow), Highbury Initiative (Birmingham), Carl Zeiss (Jena), Winner Denkfabrik competition (Berlin).

Buildings and Interiors: Lloyds of London, Digital (Paris) Lloyd's Bank (Hays Galleria), Olivetti (Bari).

Teaching: Practice semester appointment. University of Cincinnati (86) University of Arizona (88).

1989 Peter Eley leaves establishes independent practice. DEGW incorporated.

1992- 2003: Academic interlude, consolidating concepts, external thought leadership

John Worthington: Professor of Architecture, Director Institute of Advanced Architectural Studies, University of York, (92-97). Cross disciplinary practice courses, Masters Design Brief Management, Review *Architectural and Town Planning in the Netherlands a European comparison* (VROM 95) Frank Duffy RIBA President, Strategic study of the profession (93-95).

Visiting Professorships: University of Sheffield-Graham Willis Professorship (1998-2008); University of Technology Sydney (93-94); Chalmers University of Technology, Gothenburg (2000-3).



Multi -client studies: Workplace Forum (91-95); Intelligent Building Europe (92); New Environments for Working, with BRE (93); Intelligent building SE Asia (98); Sustainable Accommodation for the New Economy (SANE 2002-4).

Time Utilization and Workplace performance: BA HQ Waterside; BAA terminals (Heathrow); Space studies for Universities (Bristol, Cambridge, Oxford, Trinity College, Dublin); DEGW offices Porters North, New ways of working (93-98).

The importance of Place: Imperial War Museum (Salford), Boots HQ (Nottingham), Capital One (Nottingham), NCR HQ (Paris), Centre city (Jena) Babelsberg film studios (Berlin), Two sites one city (Utrecht), High rise Rotterdam, High speed rail (Netherlands Govt), Danish Govt Property Services.

Publications: *Re-inventing the Workplace* (Worthington, 97); *The New Office* (Duffy,97); *Managing the Brief for Better Design* (Blyth Worthington 2001).

DEGW/Twynstra merged 1997 – DEGW PLC formed 2001. Offices in Europe, North America & Australia.

2001 DEGW PLC Founding partners relinquish executive positions.

Signals a point of change, walk from London to house in Suffolk. A personal way of reflecting the richness of past experiences and the opportunities ahead.

3. Giving Back

More time for reflection, travel and family, whilst continuing to give back one's cumulative knowledge, experience and insights through, teaching, writing, advising and mentoring.

Appointments

Chairman CABE/RIBA Building Futures (2003 -2007); Chairman City of Dublin Urban Advisory Panel (2001 – 2011); Board Member London Thames Gateway Development Corporation (2004-.-2009); Professorial Fellow University of Melbourne (2006 - 2010); Vice Chairman Cambridgeshire Sustainable Growth Quality Panel (2009 – 2015); Director The Academy of Urbanism (2009-.-2015); Director Changing Chelmsford CIC (2011 – 2016); Commissioner the Independent Transport Commission (ITC 2011- 2017).

Consulting



High Rise Commission, Rotterdam.

Chairman City Centre High Rise Commission, Rotterdam (2000 -2004); Copenhagen, advisor to Danish government *Collaborating through Clustering – Building Locations that support effective Government*; Northern Ireland, RTPI Conference: *Urban strategies- Pointers from European experience*; Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority, Darling Harbour competition brief (2006); Expert group scoping study centre for urban design and innovation, Dubai (2007-8); University of Lund, Advisor campus development framework (2010); LTGDC Advisor Dagenham dock Sustainable Industrial Park (2009-2010); Milton Keynes-

Fred Roche Foundation (2012); Washington DC, National Capital Planning Commission, Expert panel, *How high? Density, Intensity, Identity* (2014).

Community



Workshop on Changing Chelmsford.

AoU UniverCities (2009-10); Changing Chelmsford *How Bold is your vision?* (2011-16), RSA, AoU, County, City and the Universities; AoU 10X10X10 Improving livelihoods through understanding place (2009-10); Places of Connection – Utrecht 2012 AoU/INTA, European Learning Cities Platform (2011-13); INTA Expert panels, Tallinn, Warsaw, Taiwan, La Reunion.

Independent Transport Commission review of High speed Rail (2013 -16); *Ambitions & Opportunities* (2014); *Connected Cities* (2016).

Academia, Learning and Practice

Higher Education Authority Ireland *A future for architectural education in Ireland* (2005); Dutch universities research assessment panel Architecture and Built Environment research assessment panel (2003 and 10); Visiting Lecturer and external examiner Architectural Association (2008 -14).

Visiting professor: Kyushu University Japan (2012); Visiting lecturer, TU Munich, Tu Delft, Alto University Helsinki, NTNU Trondheim, Barcelona; Keynote OECD congresses, Vienna, Riga, Moscow.

2015-17: Period of Collaboration and consolidation

2015; MASNYC Manhattan summit; ITC city region workshops. 2016; Launch Leeds; ITC *Connected Cities: Accessible Places for Growing Economies*.

MBE New Years Honours 2016: Reflecting a contribution to the communities served, an example to others and an impact on the professions involved.



2012 DEGW PLC, now with Aecom, dissolved. Rebranded Strategy Plus where the practice continues to evolve.

2016 DEGW Archive moved to University of Reading Centre for Records and Special Collections. Associated with new School of Architecture hosted by the schools of Construction and Engineering Management; Media and Communications; and Henley Business School, including real estate and planning.

The DEGW legacy through its records and alumni is recognised as a valuable asset for research and teaching. Ambition to develop a “living archive” and foundation to reflect the spirit, culture and concepts of DEGW.



Image above shows John Worthington working at his home, Hemp Barn, in Suffolk.

4. Citation

The following is the citation given by Professor Stuart Green (below) in July 2016 at the award to John Worthington of an honorary degree of Doctor of Science by the University of Reading.

It is a great pleasure to present Professor John Worthington for the award of the degree of Doctor of Science of this University.

Recipients of honorary degrees tend to fall either side of a supposed binary divide between academia and practice. John would never accept such a divide, and he has spent an entire career demonstrating the inseparability of research and practice.



John is an architect who has made a huge contribution to the architectural profession, and way beyond. If you work in an office environment, if you work in a hospital, if you work in a higher education environment; you are likely to be living with the legacy of John's work on a day-to-day basis.

I shall take as my headline the title of one of John's many books – Reinventing the Workplace – and over the next few minutes I shall argue that this is much more than a book title: it's a statement of the reality of John's achievement. John originally studied architecture at the Architectural Association in London; a lifelong hunger for new ideas and fresh perspectives took him to the University of Pennsylvania and from there to the University of California, Berkeley.

In 1971 John was co-founder of DEGW, a global design consultancy which was to provide the vehicle for so much of John's contribution. The D refers to Frank Duffy, a past president of the RIBA; the E refers to Peter Eley; the G was Luigi Giffone and the W of course was John Worthington. It was a formidable team, with a formidable legacy. Such that it's almost now impossible to talk of the modern workspace without citing the contribution of DEGW.

This was a firm that pioneered design as a way of thinking. For DEGW, design was not simply about the aesthetic appearance of the building; it was about the relationship between organisational structure and the configuration of space. Their contribution lay at the interface between architecture and organisation studies. Of particular importance in the 1980s was DEGW's pioneering work into the impact of information technology on office design, as demonstrated on numerous prestigious office developments, including Broadgate in Central London and Stockley Park near Heathrow.

It is no over-statement to say that DEGW revolutionised space planning. Their ideas were initially implemented in the context of office design, but the range of applications soon extended to a wide range of building types. DEGW's contribution was of course global; at its peak the firm had 14 offices across Europe, Asia Pacific and North America.

At the forefront of this new way of thinking was an over-arching concern with TIME as being of central importance to the success of large-scale building projects. Building design needs to allow for anticipated change, but it also needs to allow for unanticipated change.

The involvement of users in the design process was paramount. The use of pre-and post-occupancy surveys, strategic briefing and focus-group techniques were all pioneered by DEGW – as was the concept of ‘hot-desking’. John I know would always share credit for these developments with his colleagues from within DEGW, and perhaps with Frank Duffy in particular.

But John, for me, personified – and continues to personify - DEGW’s core ethos. Here was a firm which placed research at the very heart of its being. In truth, DEGW had much in common with the idealised model of a university; it was committed to research; it was committed to learning; it was committed to ideas; it was committed to publication.

I was personally fortunate enough to be invited to a number of seminars at DEGW’s offices behind Kings Cross Station during the mid-1990s. There was never quite an agenda, but there was always a great discussion. On many occasions, I listened to a succession of seemingly disconnected contributions. But John never failed to pull the threads together into a narrative which imbued the conversation with a sense of meaning, and a strong sense of direction. This for me was a metaphor for the very act of design itself. And here perhaps lies an alternative interpretation of John’s career even beyond the idea of Re-inventing the Workplace – this very powerful idea of design as a unifying narrative.

John has also held a range of academic positions all over the world, including Professor of Architecture and Director of the Institute of Advanced Architectural Studies at the University of York, Visiting Professor at Chalmers University of Technology, Gothenburg and at the University of Sheffield, and Professorial Fellow at the University of Melbourne.

In 2009 DEGW was taken over by Davis Langdon, who were in turn subsequently subsumed within the huge global conglomerate of AECOM. There remains a very special bond amongst all those who worked for DEGW. They all possess the same shared determination to ensure that the legacy of the firm lives on. On this note, I am personally delighted that we have the DEGW Archive here at the University of Reading. This is a significant research resource which we are already starting to mobilise.

The archive of course is not just of interest to the new School of Architecture here at the University of Reading, but also to colleagues across the whole range of built environment disciplines - including those in the Henley Business School. But there is more. In 1995, John undertook a major assessment of Architecture and Planning education across six European countries for the Dutch Government. He subsequently advised the Irish Higher Education Authority on the future of architectural education in Ireland.

Other boards and panels upon which he has served include: Chairman of the Rotterdam High Rise Commission and City of Dublin Urbanism Advisory Panel.

More recent appointments include: Director of the Academy of Urbanism and Board member of the 4 London Thames Gateway Development Corporation. I could go on... and on. In recent years John has notably served as a commissioner on the prestigious Independent Transport Commission, exploring the spatial impacts of high speed rail. For John, high-speed rail is about much more than transport – it's seen as a major asset to the economic and social development of cities.

In the 2016 New Year's Honours list John was awarded an MBE for 'services to urban regeneration and voluntary service to transport'. No mention interestingly of his contribution to reinventing the workplace. But of course his contribution to urban re-generation is strong enough to stand entirely independently, on its own merits. The unifying theme throughout his varied career is that of design as a way of thinking. John has contributed to this agenda across the full range of scales – from the chair to the city. Mr Vice-Chancellor, I present John Worthington MBE for the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Science of this University.
