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Obituary

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Obituary: Lawrance Hurst

Lawrance Hurst was one of the founding fathers of *Engineering History and Heritage* in 2007–2008 and served on its Editorial Panel from the first issue in 2009 until 2017. This role was only one of many during his long career that embraced the refurbishment of existing structures, the history of materials, structures and construction, and work on a number of prominent buildings including the Custom House in London's Docklands and the Royal Albert Hall in London. He died on 10 November 2018 at the age of 85.

I first encountered Lawrance in the late 1970s at the regular meetings of the History Study Group of the Institution of Structural Engineers, which he attended regularly until the last year of his life and for which he was convenor from 2001 to 2014. I was constantly amazed at his encyclopaedic knowledge of materials and structures; in particular, fireproof flooring systems from the early-nineteenth into the twentieth century. This interest in fire-resistance led to his great interest in Edwin Sachs (1870–1919), the theatre designer who was a pioneer of the branch of construction we now call fire engineering, about whom Lawrance gave many lectures. I was one of many who benefited from Lawrance's generosity in sharing his knowledge and giving access to his unique collection of books and hundreds of trade pamphlets and publications, which occupied over 70 m of shelf space at Hurst Peirce and Malcolm, the firm his father had founded in 1910, and which Lawrance joined in 1967 after working for ten years at for Andrews, Kent and Stone.

A significant proportion of the work undertaken by Hurst, Peirce and Malcolm is to old buildings in London, and Lawrance soon became aware of the additional considerations that were required when redeveloping a London site due to the presence of party walls. He became an expert on the structural engineering aspects of the Party Wall etc. Act 1996 and was frequently nominated as the third surveyor in party wall agreements, where his expertise was used to resolve disputes. Lawrance joined the Pyramus and Thisbe Club, the home and representative body for London's party wall surveyors, where his expertise was highly valued. He became a member of the Pyramus and Thisbe Club's National Committee and was its chairman in 1996. He was a major contributor to the redrafting of the Party Wall etc. Act published in 1996. His understanding and experience of party wall issues was so well appreciated that when he 'retired' in 1999, he was still advising 123 surveyors on 93 party walls beside 53 owners' sites and buildings, all done with his typically pragmatic approach and enthusiasm for getting the job done.

During his career, Lawrance gave advice relating to a large number of important historic buildings in London. With his growing knowledge of the behaviour of historic building materials, he was invited to advise on the condition and conservation of the terracotta facing to the exterior of the Albert Hall. Following the designation of London as a smokeless zone in the 1960s, many of London's landmark buildings were cleaned. Grit blasting was the accepted method for stone-faced buildings and the same method was used on the Albert Hall. No longer acceptable, but just about tolerable on Portland Stone facings, it was not suitable for glazed terracotta as it would strip off the glazing and let water in. Lawrance's advice was sought on how to make the best of a bad job and he was later co-opted onto the Fabric Committee for the Albert Hall, where he gave advice over many years. He also joined the Estates and Buildings Advisory Committee at the Natural History Museum in London, where his advice was regularly well received.

Lawrance was deeply involved in both the IStructE and the Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE), serving on many committees, working parties and editorial boards for guides, reports and journals. In 1999, he gave the prestigious Sutherland History Lecture entitled 'An Iron Lineage' about his father and Hurst, Peirce and Malcolm, and how the firm's history was bound up with the development of fire-proof construction and reflected the changing world around it. In 2006, Lawrance was awarded the Lewis Kent Award for his commitment to the IStructE. Among his many contributions to the ICE, he was

Figure 1. Bertram Lawrance Hurst, 1934–2018

chair of the Archives Panel for a while, was a regular contributor to the work of the Panel for Historical Engineering Works (PHEW) and was actively involved in the birth of the Conservation Accreditation Register for Engineers in 2008.

Away from structural engineering, Lawrance had an interest in clocks and clock making from an early age. Like his elder brother Michael, Lawrance was a founding member of the Antiquarian Horological Society in 1953, serving the society in many ways, as well as completing a distinguished career with the Clockmakers' Company. He was co-editor of *Antiquarian Horology* for many years. He joined the Clockmakers' Livery in 1975, serving as steward in 1985 and was elected as court assistant in 2001 and remained active until his death. Letters received from livery members talk of his extensive knowledge of clocks and watches and his generosity, both in giving his time freely and sharing his knowledge. Lawrance was passionate about the Clockmakers' Museum and he served as advisor and trustee of the Museum and Educational Trust longer than anyone else. He was particularly proud of being instrumental for finding a new home for the Clockmakers' collection at the Science Museum in London.

Everyone who knew or met Lawrance will remember his infectious enthusiasm for everything, but especially for buildings, materials and history. His presence and contributions to countless meetings are greatly missed, but he will be remembered for 'making a difference' wherever he was, and *Engineering History and Heritage* owes him a particularly large debt.

Acknowledgements

This obituary was compiled using information provided by Lawrance's son, Philip Hurst, Andrew Dutton of Hurst, Peirce and Malcolm, Mike Chrimes, Vice Chairman of PHEW, and Andrew Smith, convenor of the IStructE's History Study Group.

Bill Addis