

Anthony (Tony) Hickman RIBA (1931 – 2017)

Long serving Secretary General of the Franco British Union of Architects



Tony began his studies as an architect in 1948 at the Kingston School of Art, now part of Kingston Polytechnic. An Architecture course had been started up at Kingston by Eric Brown in 1942. At that time the course was not recognised by the RIBA. To qualify, students like Tony had to submit portfolios of work to the RIBA and sit its external examinations. This made qualifying more difficult and protracted. For this and other reasons, including 2 years National Service in the RAF, it was not until 1961 that Tony finally received his Diploma.

Tony's first job was in the office of John Harris, where he worked in 1955-56 and again from 1958 to 1964. He was ambitious and from the outset wanted to become a principal in private practice. When John Harris refused his request for a partnership, Tony decided to move on.

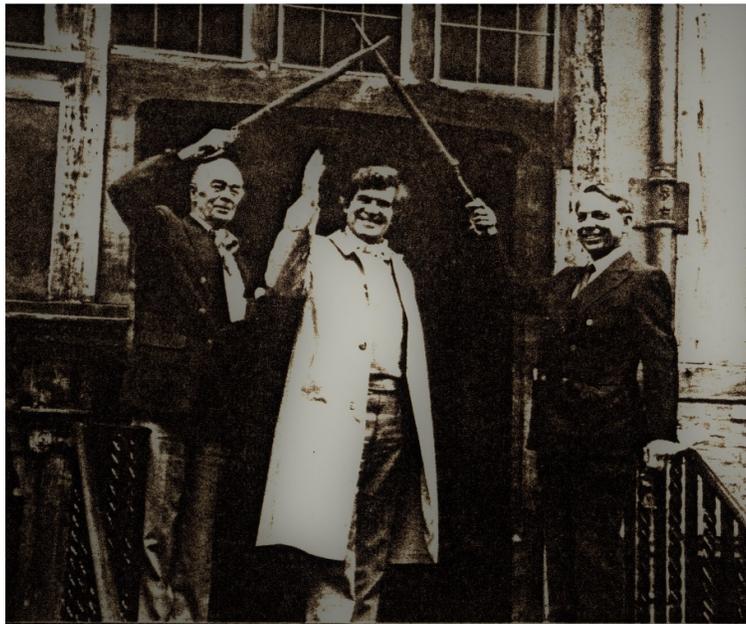
His next role was working for British Gypsum as Group Architect, which he did for 7 years from 1964 to 1971, before becoming an Associate for 3 years in the firm of Adams Holden and Pearson, a commercial practice based in London, well known for their modernist architectural work for London Underground stations

In 1974 Tony joined the firm of Stevens Scanlan, Surveyors and Architects, as a Partner, remaining in that role until 2000 when he became a Consultant. A man of broad interests and social commitment, Tony was a generalist and able all-rounder, who moved easily between different professional roles and different types of building project. He saw the way that architects were being side-lined, their responsibilities diminished and encroached upon by other professions. He regretted this trend always kicked hard against it.

In 1969, Tony was elected to membership of the Franco British Union of Architects, quickly becoming a member of its British Committee. In the years that followed he came to play a huge role in the Union and an unmatched dedication to its continuing success. He was highly respected by both French and British members for his able administration of Union affairs and for the wisdom, foresight and good sense he always showed. He has been described as the Union's pillar.

Normally a British Secretary serves a 2-year term but Tony stayed in place for a total of 6 years. Then in 1981 he moved on to become Vice President, before being elected President in 1982. For his Presidency, Tony organised a 4-day Reunion Congress based in York. This involved a programme of architectural visits in and around the City, including the Minster,

and a candlelit Banquet Dinner at Castle Howard. Not to be outdone, the subsequent French President, another Tony, Tony Bechu, laid on a matching event the following year at Chateau de Chambord.



Clive Pascall, Pierre Devinoy and Tony Hickman in York 1982

Not content with the Presidency, after which most members sit back and relax, Tony moved straight on into the role of Secretary General. This is truly the Union's top job, and one that he fulfilled this role with supreme skill and dedication for some 17 years, before standing down in 2000. During that time he maintained close liaison with all French and British members and their Committees, and with the Embassies and Cultural bodies of both countries. Almost singlehandedly, he ran a scheme of bursaries for French and British architectural students, with financial support from the British Council and L'Institut Francais. He was awarded the Palme Academique in recognition of his role.

Tony was always on the lookout for suitable new members, those with a genuine interest in fostering understanding and friendship between French and British architects. Many Union members were introduced by him, including me. But he was rightly always wary of those who he thought were merely interested in the Union for commercial reasons and self-promotion.

When I came to take on the Secretary General's role, and talked to him about what it entailed, he said to me with typical understatement 'it's not difficult, you're just there to maintain continuity'. But of course he always did so very much more than that.

Howard Nash
December 2017