

LAP ARCHITECTS + INTERIOR DESIGNERS LTD.

Notes on the early history of the Practice.

The Practice was formed during the 1930's by Kenneth J Lindy

In the early 1940's the practice combined with Joseph Hill, who was a prolific designer of Pubs during the 1930's.

The pubs were typical of the age with vast open bars, very long counters and little comfort except in the Lounge Bars. Many of the pubs were remodelled in the 1960's

At this time the Practice was known as Kenneth Lindy, Joseph Hill and Partners, Architects & Surveyors.

One of the Partners was a surveyor, and there were surveyors on the staff until the late 1950's

Kenneth Lindy bought a Practice known as T H Smith & Wimble, an old established city practice, who designed and built the "new" Baltic Exchange building in St. Mary Axe. The building was opened on 21st April 1903.

By the 1950's the practice had an office in 24 St. Mary Axe (over the Baltic exchange), an office in the Minories (also in the City), and an office in Loughton, Essex (where KJL lived)

During the 1940's and early 1950's the workload included reinstatement of war damage, maintenance of pubs, office remodelling, factory buildings, warehouse buildings, new office blocks, swimming pools, and sports facilities.

Clients at that time included:

The Baltic Exchange, (work in the offices and the Members Rooms), shipping companies, (Livanos, Andrew Wier, Shipping Federation, etc.), Batgers (sweet manufacturers) J L Randall, (Toy and Game makers), City Parochial Charities, Nicholsons (Gin distillers), Bass, Manns, Trumans, Levy & Franks (who became Chef & Brewer)

The central nucleus of Grange Farm sports & camping centre, Chigwell, was built in the early 50's and was opened by Princess Elizabeth. The site continued to be developed and expanded throughout the 60's.

During the late 50's and early 60's the practice reduced its very long name to Kenneth Lindy & Partners. At this time the City office was open on SATURDAYS! KJL deemed it necessary for two staff to be in "in case the phone rang" (It never did!) A rota system was in place.

A party, to celebrate Kenneth Lindy's 21st year in practice, was held in the Members rooms of the Baltic Exchange in 1953.

The Practice was almost wiped out in the early 50's (after the party!) when the Government decreed that Building Licenses should be introduced. No new office buildings could be constructed without a license and many of the Practices larger projects

were put on "hold". All of the City staff were given notice. Only the Partners, a typist and the company secretary would have remained.

Fortunately, a license was granted for 14-20 St. Mary Axe, the Baltic extension, and an office junior was retained (Guess who??)

During the mid to late 1950's the Baltic became a very major client. Much remodelling of the Members rooms took place plus the construction of 14-20 St Mary Axe. At this time the client list also included Stanley Thaike (Office developer), The Worshipful Company of Shipwrights, Shipping companies, Bass, Trumans, Levy & Franks, Lovell & Christmas (Importers and wholesalers in Smithfield, Armour & Co (meat importers in Smithfield and Bristol), Nicholsons (Pubs and warehousing) J&L Randall, Batgers, & Lloyds Register of Shipping.

14-20 St. Mary Axe was a unique building at the time. All new office buildings in the City were required to incorporate basement parking, but the basement of 14-20 had a large Banqueting facility, kitchens, a bar, foyers and cloakrooms. Not a single car!

The centre of the basement area HAD TO BE PROOF AGAINST THE ATOM BOMB! This meant that it had to be capable of supporting the entire collapse load of the superstructure.

The client also required a large Banqueting Hall which could be subdivided into two unequal parts, each of which was to appear complete, (no sliding /folding screens), linked to the kitchen and sufficiently sound proof to enable two separate functions to take place simultaneously. The solution was a "wall" which disappeared into the floor at the press of a button.. It was fifty feet long, a foot thick, was of steel lattice construction and was operated by electric screw jacks. Otis installed the machinery in a specially designed sub-basement. They could not "guarantee that the wall would stop rising at a precise point and needed a 1.5 inch tolerance. This was a problem since the top of the wall reached a fibrous plaster suspended ceiling which would not resist much pressure! A spring loaded capping was designed which provided the tolerance at the top and also settled into a seating in the floor when the wall was down. A strip of carpet on the top of the capping meant that only two lines were visible at the edges of the capping when the room was undivided

The foundation stone for 14-20 St. Mary Axe was laid by Sir Winston Churchill in 1955. The building was opened, by HM the Queen in 1956.

Sir Winston was very proud of his "bricklayers" union card, and took great pains to ensure that the "stone" was properly bedded and level. The stone was, in fact, a marble slab and had been placed in a location which was convenient at the time. It was unceremoniously removed about half an hour after Sir W had gone and carefully stored in a purpose made crate in the site office! Unfortunately some members of the Baltic had not seen the stone before its removal, so it was re-laid and the plan of the building was modified to permanently accommodate it.

Douglas Austin was made a Partner in the practice shortly after the completion of 14-20 St. Mary Axe, which he supervised. The Practice was to remain known as Kenneth Lindy and Partners for the next ten years, with offices in St Mary Axe and Loughton.

Under this banner, the practice prospered, and the Client list expanded to include the Actors Charitable Trust, Brentwood Council, National Provincial bank, Williams Deacons Bank in addition to the earlier list.

During the 1960's, the Practice created the first Chef & Brewer steak houses.

Berni Inns had started the Steak House and Sherry Bar phenomenon in the late 1950's, offering fantastic steaks as part of a limited menu operation and very reasonable prices. Levy & Franks, whose sign was a chef and a brewer, formed a company to emulate the success of the Berni operation which was to be their making and then their demise!

The first three steak houses were The Wheatsheaf, Virginia Water; The Swiss Cottage, London; and The Whyte Lyon, Hartley Wintney, all completed during 1964-5. Many other projects were carried out by the Practice for Chef & Brewer, at this time AND we even supplied them with two members of our staff to set up their own design group! Alas, they expanded too quickly, the bubble burst, and they were taken over by Grand Metropolitan Hotels in the late 1960's.

Fortunately for the practice, our work had caught the eye of W F Hannon, who was in charge of Schooner Inns. This was Watneys answer to the steak house challenge, and as the C&B workload disappeared, we became involved with Schooner Inns and created several steak houses for them from 1966 onwards.

Watney Mann, featured very largely in our client profile at this time. Not only were we designing steak houses, but we worked for many of their subsidiary, managed house companies, notably St. Georges Taverns, Clifton Inns,