



EXPRESS.co.uk

Home of the Daily and Sunday Express



Our Paper
Front and
Back Pages, E
-Edition and
Back Issues...

Weather
12°C
London



Horoscope

MyEXPRESS

Your PROFILE
Your COMMENTS
Your SPACE

[SIGN IN / UP](#)

Sunday 16th January 2011

Site Google

SEARCH

MAVERICK CHANGED FACE OF LONDON'S DOCKLANDS

Sunday January 16, 2011

Ted Jeory

A CAMPAIGN is underway to honour the "extraordinary visionary" who drove through one of Europe's most successful regeneration projects that paved the way for Britain's Olympics in 2012.

Reg Ward, known as the "father of London's Docklands" died 10 days ago, aged 83.

He was never honoured in his lifetime, despite leaving a legacy that includes Canary Wharf, London City Airport and the Docklands Light Railway.

He was the first chairman of the London Docklands Development Corporation, having been appointed by Margaret Thatcher's then Environment Secretary Michael Heseltine in 1981.

EXPRESS CASINO: GET A FREE BONUS OF UP TO £150 NOW!

He was asked to think the unthinkable and he made it happen.

A former chief executive of Hammersmith and Fulham Council in London, his choice was controversial, but Lord Heseltine gambled on his can-do personality.

He wanted Mr Ward to work directly with him and avoid the left wing councils that ran a swathe of east London still struggling to recover from the devastation of the Blitz.

When Mr Ward arrived for his task, the Isle of Dogs was, according to one of his colleagues, "just barbed wire and wild dogs" and run-down housing.

Civil servants envisaged an enterprise zone that would help the thousands of dockers who were losing their jobs.

However, Mr Ward had bigger ideas: he foresaw a huge area of skyscrapers containing some of the world's biggest banks.

For that, he realised the area needed trains and planes - and so the Docklands Light Railway and City Airport were born.

Last night, Richard Desmond, the owner of Northern and Shell, the parent company of Express Newspapers, paid his own glowing tribute.

Mr Desmond was the first businessman to own, design, build and then occupy offices in the Docklands scheme in 1982.

He said that when Mr Ward and businessman Nigel Broackes explained the initial vision, he thought they were "insane".

"Reg showed me drawings of airports, bridges and trains and huge buildings and all I could see was mud," he said.

"As I left, Broackes said, 'Mr Desmond, by investing n Docklands it will be the best thing you have ever done because Mrs Thatcher is putting in billions of pounds from the Government to make this happen.'

"So I turned and pointed at a piece of land and I said, 'Ok, I'll buy that,' and we did.

"I used every single penny in the world that I had or ever dreamt of having and borrowed money on top of that and we built and completed the buildings by 1984.

"We were the first there."

He said Mr Ward then encouraged him to expand, even appointing him as a consultant to the LDDC as an incentive.

"One of my first missions was to go and visit Lord Hartwell, who was the chairman and owner of Telegraph Newspapers, and convince them to put their new printing plant in a 15-acre site in the Docklands," he said.

"The irony of this is that 30-odd years later I end up owning that site [with Westferry Printers]."

He added: "It was a shining example of how Thatcher's Britain changed things.

"The old bureaucrats didn't want to leave anything of the old docks, but Reggie made sure the cranes remained and put up plaques that tell you its history.

"There's no doubt whatsoever that without Reg Ward there would be no Canary Wharf, there would be no Docklands and it would be a low-value, low-key industrial park and my company would look

very different.

"Make no mistake, Reg Ward was the man and the civil servants hated him.

"Everybody who went by the rulebook hated him, which is why I loved him. He was a good man."

It was that fractious relationship with Whitehall which saw Mr Ward ousted when the Canadian Reichman brothers bought the site in 1987.

Although he went on to work on other regenerations schemes around the world, Docklands remains his greatest monument.

He was never honoured in his lifetime and his former colleagues believe the country should now make amends.

However, Lord Heseltine fears it is too late. He told the Sunday Express: "I tried as did other ministers to achieve appropriate recognition. We failed. This is a matter of great regret to me.

"He was an outstanding success and his appointment led to one of the world's outstanding regeneration projects.

"His energy was proverbial, his imagination huge. I greatly enjoyed working with him.

"We owe him a great debt."

His wife Betty died last year and he is survived by a son and a daughter.



[Home](#) | [Archive](#) | [NEWS](#) | [SPORT](#) | [FEATURES](#) | [MONEY](#) | [HOROSCOPE](#) | [TRAVELOK! Magazine](#) | [The Daily Star](#) | [new! Magazine](#) | [Star Magazine](#)
[Sitemap](#) | [Print Archive](#) | [Contact](#) | [Advertise Here](#) | [Site Credits](#) Copyright ©2006 Northern and Shell Media Publications. "Daily Express" is a registered trademark.
All rights reserved. By viewing this site you agree to our [Terms and Conditions](#) and [Privacy Policy](#).