

The Docklands - 10th July 2011

## Tributes paid to the man who ‘laid the foundations’ of Canary Wharf

Alistair Kleebauer, Senior reporter Tuesday, July 5, 2011  
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Friends, colleagues and family paid tribute to the man who Michael Heseltine said “laid the foundations” of Canary Wharf and the Docklands last night.



*Reg Ward, a driving force behind the development of the Docklands, was remembered by friends and family at a tribute night on July 4*



*Howard Dawber of Canary Wharf Group and Kevin Wall of Barclays Bank with the portrait of Reg Ward*

Gathered at a reception in the East Wintergarden in Canary Wharf, former members of the London Docklands Development Corporation (LDDC) spoke fondly of its first chief executive, Reg Ward, who died in January this year aged 83. His daughter,

Sarah, said his passion for the area had never died and described him as “the love of her life”.

He was charged with regenerating the depressed Docklands area when he was appointed by Mr Heseltine, the then Secretary of State for the Environment, in 1980.

He has been credited as the mastermind behind the Docklands Light Railway, London City Airport, the Royal Docks and Canary Wharf itself.

Mr Heseltine, who was out of the country and spoke to the assembled crowd through a video message, said: “He was a tough guy, he was opinionated, determined.

“He was going to do it his way.

“Officials didn’t take to him. I don’t know why, I suspect because he wasn’t in awe of them.”

He added that he had tried to get Reg honoured with Stuart Innes, a director of administration at the LDDC, going on to say it was a national disgrace that Reg did not receive “even a MBE” during his lifetime.

Reg was the driving force behind the deal with Canadian property developers Olympia and York in 1987 which became the Canary Wharf development.

Other investors who were convinced to set up shop in the regenerated area were on hand to mark their respects.

Richard Desmond, owner of Express Newspapers whose Northern & Shell publishing company moved to the Docklands, led a minute’s silence and said: “What a great loss, what a good guy. Truly without him we would not be here today.”

Howard Dawber, Canary Wharf Group’s strategic advisor, accepted a portrait of Reg commissioned by former colleagues in the LDDC and sponsored by Barclays Bank.

It will hang in a newly-named Reg Ward room in One Canada Square.

He said: “When I speak to people about the early days [of the Docklands] there were all these stories and one name kept cropping up - Reg Ward.

“The people who worked for him would do anything for him.”

Reg’s son-in-law, Iain Shearer, the developer behind London ExCel and Hertsmere House, talked about Reg’s life.

He told how Reg went from a first job as a tax inspector to become a town planner and how following his departure from the LDDC in 1987, he went on to work on projects in as varied locations as St Petersburg, Boston and island of St Kitts in the Caribbean.

He said: “[Reg] never stopped dreaming and planning.”