



John Lidbury (courtesy Lidbury family)

John Dalton Lidbury (1926-2016) was born 21 March 1926 at Nurse Lappin's Private Hospital in Beaufort Street, Mount Lawley. John's father Frank Read Lidbury (c.1884-1952) was born at Islington, London and came to WA with a brother whereupon they took up land around the Donnelly River at Manjimup. Frank married Ethel Florence Cook (c.1896-1981) in 1916. Enlisting in the Australian Imperial Forces at Bunbury not long after his marriage, Frank gave his occupation as motor mechanic. Frank joined with the 69th Australian squadron of the Royal Flying Corps in 1917, and was stationed in France during the First World War, before returning to WA in mid 1919.

After the war Frank and Ethel moved from Mullalyup to live at 16 Coode Street, Mount Lawley where they had a daughter Margaret Edith in late 1920, followed by John in 1926. From 1935 the family lived at 30 Williams Road in Nedlands. Young John went to school until the age of 14, and then worked at the Taxation Office for 2 years. He studied at night school to pass his Junior Certificate in 1942, in order to enter the Air Training Corps. By this stage he was working for the Eagle Star Insurance Co. In 1944, just four days after turning eighteen, he joined the Royal Australian Air Force and travelled to Victor Harbour, South Australia and then Cunderdin as part of the Empire Air Training Scheme. He became an elementary pilot flying Tiger Moths, but by this time the Second World War was coming to an end and there was no longer a demand for pilots. John and his colleagues were sent from Cunderdin to Renmark, South Australia to pick grapes. Much to his disappointment, this meant that he couldn't take part in overseas activities. Instead he studied for his Leaving Certificate, which he acquired from Perth Technical College (PTC) in 1948 as part of being a member of the Reconstruction Training Scheme.



PTC School of Architecture football team 1952 (courtesy Lidbury family & Katrina Chisholm)
 Back: Peter Bruechle, Don Collins, Jack Finney, Bob Lyon, Ross Chisholm, Bill Weedon, Alex Doepel
 Mid: Arch Jones, Ron Facius, Gus Ferguson, Col Nicholas, Morris Fairbrother, Scott Thompson, ?
 Front: Eddie McMillan, Bill Waters, Bill Robertson, John Lidbury, Bob Day, Ted Cartwright

The Scheme also allowed Lidbury to study architecture for five years, coming under the influence of William (Bill) Haydyn Robertson. Robertson had assisted to establish the School of Architecture at PTC in 1946. John completed his studies at PTC in 1952 within a class that included Gres Cohen, Alex Doepel, John Duncan, Morris Fairbrother, Jack Finney, Eddie McMillan, Leslie Moon, Colin Nicholas, Dennis Silver, Bill Waters and John White. Shortly after John's PTC exam results were published in *The West Australian* during late December 1952, Frank Lidbury passed away at Nedlands, and John would have been again shocked when Bill Robertson died 9 March 1953, aged just 48 years.



John Lidbury (at left) and Ross Chisholm, travelling in Europe 1954 (courtesy Katrina Chisholm)

On graduation John spent a year working for Powell, Cameron & Chisholm Architects. John had won the W.H. Robertson Memorial Travel Grant for 1952 and Ossie Chisholm's son Ross won the E.G Cohen Medal in 1953. In 1954 John and Ross set off to work in England and travel in Europe for 2 years. On return John joined Hobbs, Winning & Leighton Architects. Following the Second World War, the firm had produced many notable buildings, including the State Government Insurance Offices (1956) and the National Mutual Life Building (1958) in central Perth.

Lidbury became a partner at Hobbs, Winning & Leighton in 1963. He was intimately involved in the design and documentation of scores of buildings from the late 1950s. These included many commercial premises, hotels, cinemas, hospitals, university accommodation, and schools. John was particularly proud of his work on the Christ Church Grammar School Chapel, which won the Royal Australian Institute of Architects (RAIA) Bronze Medal in 1970. John served as a councillor of the WA Chapter of the RAIA from 1961 to 1970, and was made a Fellow of the RAIA in 1966.



Yurnga Apartments 31 South Perth Esplanade, RAIA Bronze Medal winner in 1969 (Fritz Kos photo of 1968, SLWA 340919PD); and Christ Church Grammar School Chapel, RAIA Bronze Medal winner in 1970 (Fritz Kos photo of 1973, SLWA 160182PD, published in *The Architect* 82/3, Sept. 1982, p.19).

Although it is impossible to attribute the practice's extensive works in the 1960s and 1970s to individuals, John's directorship of the practice and ongoing maintenance of client relationships ensured Hobbs, Winning & Leighton remained successful. Under John's and other partners' guidance, the business

grew to become Hobbs Winning Leighton and Partners. By the early 1970s the firm had around seventy persons employed, with a branch office at Albany. At that time there were six partners (W.T. Leighton, R. Day, G.E. Pollock, J.D. Lidbury, G.H. Leighton, C.B. Nicholas), six associates (H.J. Smith, J.A. Shepherd, J.A. Blair, B.G. Moody, D.E. Brokenshire, G.R. Dyker), an engineer (P.G. Airey) and an interior designer (J.P. Morgan) listed on the company prospectus. With the creation of a Sydney office in 1989, the business was known as Hobbs Winning Australia. John was Senior Director from 1989, and retired in 1991. At the very end of the twentieth century, Hobbs Winning Australia was absorbed by the Woods Bagot company.



Gres Cohen, John Lidbury and skipper Eric Leach – all architects, and crew of *Aries*, winner of a Swan River invitation race for the Thera Shield (*The West Australian*, 23 March 1953, p.23).

Sailing became one of John's primary recreational pursuits when he was a student, first starting at Claremont Yacht Club and later at Royal Freshwater Bay Yacht Club. John's community service was exemplified by his election as a Peppermint Grove shire councillor in the period 1971-1995, the last five years of which he was President. He played golf at Karrinyup Golf Club for 43 years and was a keen bridge player, when not travelling with his wife Fleeta nee Nattrass. Married in 1964, the couple had three children. John and family lived at 23 Keane Street Peppermint Grove from the 1960s, where he died on 29 July 2016, aged ninety years.

References:

LIDBURY Frank Read: Service Number - 754: Place of Birth - London England: Place of Enlistment - Belmont WA: Next of Kin - (Wife) LIDBURY Ethel Florence, NAA B2455, 8198910 (notes initial artillery preference).

'Mullalyup', *Bunbury Herald*, 9 July 1919, p.6 (Frank Lidbury returns to Mullalyup).

'Births', *The Western Mail*, 30 December 1920, p.19 (birth of sister Margaret).

'Births', *The West Australian*, 24 March 1926, p.1 (birth at Beaufort Street, Mount Lawley).

'Letter to the Editor', *The West Australian*, 2 November 1929, p.22 (Frank at Mount Lawley, ex Royal Garrison Artillery, re compulsory military training).

'Veale-Lidbury', *The West Australian*, 1 July 1950, p.19 (engagement to Margery Veale).

Hobbs Winning Leighton and Partners, company prospectus, circa 1974, design and photography Fritz Kos Photographer Pty Ltd, preparation and printing Print Image Pty Ltd.

Hobbs Winning & Leighton photographs 1960s-1980s, 82 images by Fritz Kos, online at SLWA.

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Notes compiled on John Lidbury by the Lidbury family for celebratory function 2 August 2016.

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