

Richard Butterworth Awarded High Honour



Richard Butterworth, LFRAIA, FIArBA has been awarded the 1986 Gold Medal by the Royal Australian Institute of Architects which is the highest honour which the Institute can bestow. The citation accompanying the Award reads as follows:-

RICHARD BUTTERWORTH

"The 1986 RAlA Gold Medal is awarded to

in recognition of his most distinguished services to the profession of architecture and of his work, over many years, which has endowed the profession in a most exceptional and distinguished way.

Richard Butterworth is best known, both in his own and in other professions, as the Director of the RAlA Practice Division. In that role, his influence, knowledge, experience, professionalism, dedication and hard work have resulted in a great deal of benefit and reward to his fellow architects—in most cases without their awareness and, in all cases, without personal reward to himself.

The unique qualities which are the hallmark of Richard's work were perhaps first manifest in his days in the Melbourne practice of Bates, Smart and McCutcheon, from 1955 to 1964. Amongst many other similar tasks, one was as assistant to Sir Osborne McCutcheon in a study of the effects of government initiatives on architectural practice, arising from the then proposed Australian Universities Commission.

This particular study led to the conclusion that many architects' offices had common problems which could and should be solved, or at least studied, collectively. A "practice group" of Victorian practices was formed by Sir Osborne for this reason and Richard Butterworth's energies were directed towards development of the group under his own guidance. It developed to the stage, two years later, where it had to be transformed from an informal

and private organisation to a formal part of a professional organisation, in this case the Royal Victorian Institute of Architects. Thus it was that in 1964, Richard Butterworth became the Director of the RVIA Practice Group.

It was not only the Victorian architects who benefited from these initiatives. Others, as far afield as in Perth, took up the idea and even published some of the same material being published in Melbourne (in 'Practice Memos'), in local versions and with permission, of course. In all cases, the spade work was by Richard Butterworth.

It was inevitable that sooner or later someone would suggest that the RVIA Practice Group should be nationalised. It so happened that at the end of the 1960s, the RAI A was preparing for a new national structure. (it also so happened that Richard Butterworth was doing the spade work in that too.) In 1970, the RAI A adopted its present structure, with functional Divisions, and in 1971 the RAI A Practice Division was formed as the first of those Divisions, with Richard Butterworth as the first Director.

Most, if not all, of the twenty six Gold Medallists before Richard Butterworth have been architects whose names were publicly known and who were just as likely to appear in daily newspapers as in professional journals. The award of the Medal to Richard shows, amongst other things, that notoriety and public notice are not pre-requisites.

Obviously, someone must have been close enough to Richard to bring about his nomination for the Gold Medal but it is equally true that persons in that unique position are very few. Richard is not in the habit of telling the world about his achievements!

Publications of the Practice Division are well known in the profession (and Practice Notes in particular). What is not so well known is the fact that Richard has written most of them and edited and proof-read all of them and even printed many of them. There are in addition a great many unpublished documents which have been either written by Richard or assembled and edited by him, all of which were part of the never ending story of **working for the profession**.

A particular property of the documentation that has flowed from Richard Butterworth's hand is that much of it is very dry stuff, even to Richard. Much of it is repetitive. Much of it goes round in circles. Much of it is eventually abandoned. Much of it is for committees and councils. Much of it is spoilt by other minds. Much of it goes on for years, even on one topic. Yet Richard has remained steadfast, maintained his own equilibrium, withstood the knockers, provided inspiration to others and kept very high the profiles both of the Practice Division and the architectural profession itself.

To catalogue the works of Richard Butterworth would require more than a list of publications. There would have to be added the organisation of seminars and workshops, the giving of advice to successive RAI A Councils, the making of promotional films, the assistance to government bodies, liaison with other professions and with overseas Institutes of Architects and much else. Even if such a catalogue were possible, it would still not truly reflect Richard's work because to understand that, one has to know and understand the manner in which the work is done—quietly, efficiently, in long hours without proper compensation, and with application of a mind that considers both important principles and minute details at the same time.

Then there is also his considerable contribution to the establishment of