

SPOTLIGHT

SIR FREDERICK GIBBERD

One of the most eminent and gifted people to have been born in Earlsdon must be the architect, Sir Frederick Gibberd, who died in January of this year aged 76.

His father was the boys' Outfitter, Mr. Frederick Gibberd, whose business is still thriving in the Lower Precinct. Young Frederick, the eldest of what was to be a family of five boys, was born at 58 Albany Road, but the family soon moved first to 47 Spencer Avenue, and then in the early 20's to 23 Clarendon Street. Before moving there, however, an extension to the house was needed to accommodate the five boisterous boys and their parents. In a radio programme he made a few years ago, Sir Frederick said that it was while this work was going on that he first realised that an architect was a person who designed buildings.

The five boys first attended the Miss Steanes' little private school on the corner of Moor Street and Clarendon Street, where no doubt the sisters encouraged any artistic talent shown by their lively pupils. From the age of nine, in 1917, Frederick continued his education at King Henry VIII's Grammar School, leaving in 1924 to begin his formal training, attached to Crouch, Butler and Savage, Architects, of Birmingham, at the Birmingham School of Architecture, and in 1930 at the age of 22, he started his own practice in London, first sharing an office with the pioneer of modern architecture, Mr. F.R.S. Yorke, who strongly influenced the younger man's work.

Sir Frederick produced plans for many minor projects, gradually gaining recognition until in 1933 he won his first major commission - the designing of a large block of flats in Streatham, London. When a little later he became the Consultant Planner to the Leamington Borough Council, his interest broadened to include that of town development planning, and his major projects in this field included work in Nuneaton, Leamington, Stratford and Banbury. His most notable work, however, in which he was involved until 1972, was Harlow New Town, where his great love of gardening found expression in the extremely successful landscaping of the area - a new concept at that time, and one to which he always paid meticulous attention.

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Among the many notable buildings he designed were the Mosque in Regents Park and the Roman Catholic Cathedral of Liverpool, both of which commissions he won in open competition. During this summer, when many Earlsdon people will be visiting Liverpool for the splendid Garden Festival, it would be a pity if they didn't take the opportunity at the same time to visit the new Cathedral. The impressive



fortress-like, gaunt, grey exterior does nothing to prepare the visitor for the glorious burst of colour one meets inside. The light streams through brilliant stained glass windows into the circular, uncluttered interior, giving an impression of space and colour, elegant but warm.

The Cathedral was completed in 1967 and in that year Frederick Gibberd received his Knighthood, the highest of the many awards he received over the years for his outstanding contribution to the architecture of the country.

We are grateful to Mary Montes of Dalton Road for writing this article for ECHO. Our thanks go also to Charles Gibberd for supplying the photograph.