

John Charles Tozer 1926-2018



John always said from a very young age that all he ever wanted to do was to make things – this he certainly did, all his life, and with steely determination to the end.

John was born on 19th of December 1926 in Wildwood Road. He never wanted to live anywhere else except Hampstead Garden Suburb, and never did. With his parents, Charles and Kitty, younger sister Mary and the ever-present dogs, he lived at both 78 and 102 Wildwood Road, then later at 11 Heathgate. John's grandfather W.C. Tozer had done well making piano hammers and had bought himself and his two sons, one of whom was John's father, 'new' houses at the very founding of the Suburb. So grandparents, aunts, uncles and nine cousins all lived nearby.

John went to Kindergarten at Henrietta Barnett School and then to Leas House Prep School on Kingsley Way. At Leas House John made friendships that would last his whole life. There is now just one left – John Mack

– who lives in Laguna Beach, California, and until recently, made an annual visit to London.

As a child, John's summer holidays were spent in Salcombe, South Devon, where he began his love affair with sailing boats. It was from a nearby village in Devon that the first Tozer, a 'Boot Maker' came to London in the 18th Century.

As a teenager during the war, John made a wireless, a gramophone and set up a telephone system for three of his friends in Wildwood Road to phone one another. This involved crawling through neighbours back gardens in the dead of night laying cables.

At 16 John was in the Home Guard. He was sent to collect his kit from somewhere in Golders Green and returned home, on his bike, with a rifle and hand grenades! At 18 in 1945 John was called up into the army. He joined the Royal Artillery, was stationed in Germany, and was taught to drive and maintain all types of vehicles.

During the 1950s important events took place which affected the rest of his life. Through a Suburb friend, Rex Clutton, he was invited to join a syndicate in the ownership of a beautiful, 40-foot sailing yacht, 'Melanie'.

Then together with Rex and Ron Narramore, a friend and Leas House friend, he bought three French Racing Cars – called Amilcars – that had been taken to pieces at the start of

the war and stored. They rented a garage in Hampstead Way and spent the next two years putting the cars back together. John went on to win many trophies in the car; he also managed to learn to fly.

'Narramore & Tozer' was thus born, making components for a multitude of industries. Starting in Kentish Town before moving to Camden Town, John was now back to the part of town where the Tozers had made piano hammers.

Then he met Helen in 1961 and they married in 1962, bought a house in Willifield Way and had James in 1963 followed by Jo in 1965. The Amilcar and Melanie went, and a family-sized sailing boat bought. John turned their two-bedroom house into a three-bedroom, not what most people do on their own, but John liked making things.

In 1967 a larger house was needed to accommodate Helen's father, not to mention the boat and cars, so the move was made to Reynolds Close. Over the years, John painted and papered every wall, ceiling, door and window, put in central heating and built numerous cupboards. Christmas presents were also always made for James and Jo. The 'Wendy House', still in the front garden, a model railway, a dolls house, a fort, a puppet-theatre and many bikes of all shapes and sizes, depending on what was to be found in a skip, and all made to look like new when finished. John always reckoned that Hampstead Garden Suburb had very high quality skips – John could never pass a skip without

stopping the car to look inside!

John was always happy to help friends and neighbours in the Close to repair things, start cars and even climb up drainpipes to get in windows when locked out. Sometimes there was a queue of neighbours at his garage needing help with something. If John ever said, "you will have to buy a new" something then you *really did* have to. John did not often use the word "buy".

When a bird-bath was needed, John cast the bowl in concrete in an upturned metal dustbin lid, it's still in use today. John always enjoyed feeding and watching the birds in the garden, and had a hedgehog house. He fed the hedgehogs every day. He thought that they might be descendants of some of the hedgehogs that had been saved during the war. On the heath, trenches had been dug to prevent enemy aircraft from landing. At night, hedgehogs fell into those trenches and in the morning had to be rescued by him and Mary.

There were two big events in Reynolds Close: the hot summer of 1976 was immediately followed by a big flood and parts of Reynolds Close were underwater. John, along with others, embarked on lifting all the manhole-covers to drain the water with John using his inflatable dingy. In 1987 a great storm hit. Daniel recalls John up-righting a tree by "an improbable system of ropes and pulleys". It still stands today.

John, who was admired by all his colleagues, could make a

complicated part for a client and then design a machine to make it. ThrustSSC, the British jet-propelled car developed by Richard Noble in 1997, which broke the land-speed record that it still holds today used John's braking system. He was invited to a practice run and was presented with a model of the car.

In the 1980s John began restoring an Austin 7, and then won more trophies. An Austin 10 followed and finally, at 75, after a heart bypass operation he said, "I need a new sports car" and bought his 1936 Triumph Gloria, which was sold after his stroke, in 2013.

Hearing and speech became major problems but he always enjoyed meeting dogs at the shops or on the Heath, where these impediments were not a factor. He loved his children's dogs and in hospital after a fall, he was able to watch live videos of James' new puppy, Kenzie, in San Diego, and Jo brought her dogs, Harvey and Gemma, to visit

– positioning them strategically where John could see them from his window at Finchley Memorial Hospital. At this time the biggest smile that Helen can remember on John was for a large brown Labrador Therapy Dog at the Royal Free who was actually allowed on his bed.

John was very proud of James and Jo. James inherited John's determination in deciding in his early 20's to live in California. As John was fascinated by machines, James is fascinated by modern technology. Jo has inherited John's love and skill in making things, particularly in restoring and furnishing houses.

In a note from his friend Sue, she writes "Everyone who met him, loved him. But none as much as those of us (probably hundreds) whose houses are littered with gadgets, repairs, products and projects that he designed or made or fixed, or sometimes just encouraged us to attempt ourselves – he was the most helpful person in the world."



John with his Amilcar at Silverstone

Twinkle, twinkle little star...

...how I wonder what you...were? In January, we will celebrate Twelfth Night and remember the star that led the Wise Men to a stable in Bethlehem. Our thoughts will turn naturally to the night sky.

Long winter nights provide ample opportunity, particularly around the time of the new moon, to gaze in wonder at the stars. It might be a sign of age but it seems to me that we see fewer stars than before.

These pictures, sent by a friend, and taken at night looking over Bath in 1950 and 2000 respectively, may, however, offer a different explanation.



Over the past fifty years, city lights have increasingly blotted out the view of the night skies – one wonders quite how William Herschel, who lived in Bath, would

have discovered Uranus had he been alive today!

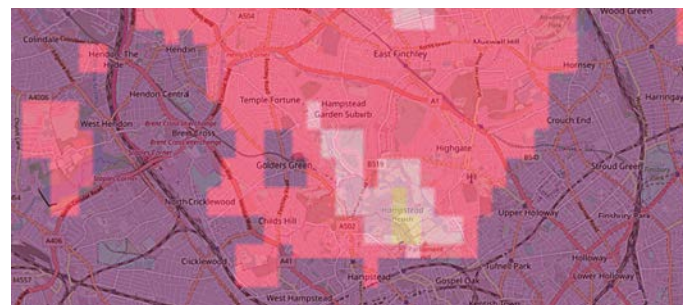
Our ancestors experienced a night sky that inspired science, religion, philosophy, art and literature and yet as a result of our choices today, millions of children across the globe will never know the wonder of the Milky Way (we live on one of its minor spurs, the Orion Arm).

So what of London and the South-East? Data from American weather satellites has enabled measurement of the amount of light spilling up into the night sky. The Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) has mapped light pollution levels in England and found that between 1993 and 2000 the country got 26% brighter and the South-East 19% brighter. On the 2015 maps below dark purple shows the places with the highest levels of light pollution and dark blue the places with very little light pollution. Just look below at the difference!

Fortunately, there is growing awareness of the negative impact of lighting, not only on our ability to see the night sky and the stars, but also on wildlife and the wider natural environment (disruption of circadian rhythms; increase in carbon emissions); on human health (links to depression,



Map showing light pollution in the UK in 1993 and 2000 (source: CPRE)



Map showing light pollution in the Hampstead Garden Suburb (centre – on the edge of densely lit (purple) central London. Hampstead Heath is shown in pale pink and yellow, the rest of the Suburb is dark pink. As well as being close to central London, the Suburb is close to densely lit Golders Green, Crouch End and Upper Holloway

obesity, cancer etc.) and on the economy and our energy supplies (energy waste due to overly bright and ill-directed lighting schemes).

Increased security is often the reason given for installing outdoor lighting schemes; however, there is little hard evidence to support this. Despite the popularity of external lighting, Home Office statistical evidence indicates that the presence or absence of lights is of little or no importance. Indeed, such lighting, if installed incorrectly, can make one less safe by making victims and property more visible to criminals. It can also create deep areas of shadow in which would-be criminals can hide. The International Dark Sky website www.darksky.org has a number of videos under its heading 'Resources'. The video 'Ambush' makes interesting viewing.



Note how the person standing under the light becomes more visible the more light is directed downwards

friendly lighting when it is needed, where it is needed and only as much as is needed.

If you would like to find out more about dark-sky friendly lighting, dark skies, dark sky parks, communities, or events go to the International Dark Sky Association (IDA) www.darksky.org, Campaign for Dark Skies (CfDS is the campaigning arm of the British Astronomical Association) www.britastro.org/dark-skies or Campaign to Protect Rural England www.cpre.org.uk websites.

We may yet rediscover the wonder of the night skies the Wise Men saw for ourselves...

ISABELLE FLICKER

Hall and Randall Plumbers

Plumbing and Heating Services • Property Maintenance



Central Heating, Plumbing Repairs & Advisory Service

Look no further... your local plumbers

Emergency repairs, blocked pipes, drainage, guttering, roofing, central heating and boilers.
12 months guarantee, 40 years experience

132 Manor Way, Borehamwood, Herts, WD6 1QX

Web: www.hallandrandallplumbers.com

Email: office@hallandrandall.com

Tel: 020 8953 2094 • Fax: 020 8905 1602

Evenings: Garry 020 8207 3286 • Greg 020 8953 9828



Welcome to St Jude's

Sunday December 16:

6pm Nine Lessons and Carols, followed by mince pies and mulled wine

Christmas Eve:

4pm Nativity Play

11.30pm Midnight Mass

Christmas Day:

8am Mass of the Dawn

10.30am Christmas Celebration followed by seasonal refreshments

All Welcome



SAINT JUDE-ON-THE-HILL • THE PARISH CHURCH OF HAMPSTEAD GARDEN SUBURB

www.stjudeonthehill.com