

## Dreams for Northern England

**According to my mother I was born during an air raid on Sheffield in the Second World War.** The midwife declared me a handsome dead male, but managed to bring me to life by dipping me in buckets of warm water and then cold water.

In my first memory I sit alone on the rubble of war looking down upon a bombed industrial landscape, trimmed in the distance with the movement of traffic. I was born in the spring 1942 into a family living at the corroding bottom of the English industrial working class. My formative years were spent in the ruins of bombed cities.



Grandad and me

As a child of five I went to live with my maternal grandfather and his new wife Elsie. I didn't see the rest of my family again until my grandfather died five years later. Throughout that time my grandfather was blind and epileptic, the consequence of shrapnel to the head received during the carnage of the First World War. As a wild and unwanted child I was mothered by granny Elsie. A women of strength and much humanity; she shaped many of my attitudes towards life.

From five to fifteen I attended nine schools. My long distance vision went when I was eleven, nobody really cared, least of all myself. It was considered sissy to wear glasses a sign of social imperfection. At these places of learning I became good at stopping people beating me up. I was unusually tall for my age and as a stranger in the school I attracted attention. It was all quite tribal. Finally in my last school I became the cock of the school.



Age 15

I spent the last years of my education in a religious school filled with prejudice and indifference. I graduated from St Boniface's as part of a class of thirty males age fifteen, the majority of whom could neither read nor write, I could not even see the blackboard.

I became an apprentice house painter, and then moved up to Art School and then I became a genius and moved to North America. As I began to look back at the crumbling industrial North of England, I saw the possibilities of building social bridges around old abandoned structures, an alternative to the urban butchery of cowboy capitalism and inept local bureaucracies.



Ship Canal



Central Station



GNR Warehouse

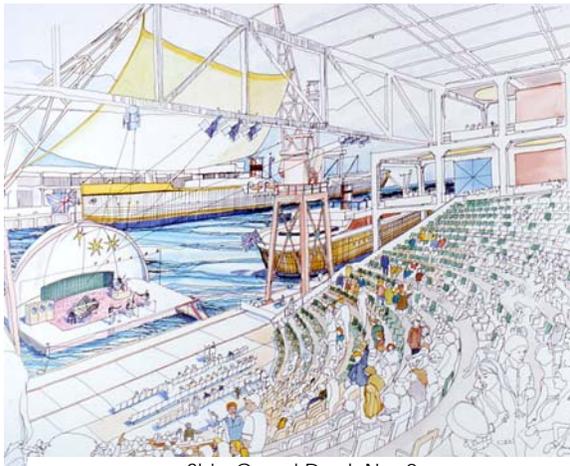
By the time I resurfaced again in the North of England I had formed a design group with two partners Rose Duell and Len Rydahl and we were making fortunes for private capital in the theme park entertainment industries, as well as working on various world fairs.

We learned that the Clore Duffield Foundation was planning **to build an interactive children's museum in London.** At that time we were developing a commercially viable attraction for The Museum Wharf on the Boston waterfront.

Seeing the potential for northern cities, I wrote to Ms Clore and offered to plan and design the attraction for free if she would move the project to one of the inner cities in the North of England. She agreed and Eureka was built in the old railway yards of Halifax, just a few miles away from Sheffield the city where I was born,



Eureka Halifax



Ship Canal Dock No. 9

The Manchester Ship Canal, built during Victorian times to service the world's first industrial park - Trafford Park. **As an engineering achievement in nineteenth century terms it was equal to putting a man on the moon.** As a child I bicycled past its gates on my way to work in Trafford Park.

During the 1980's with the rapid de-industrialization of England the canal became an open sewer filled with the refuse of its industrial past, a grim

monument to a failed future of unemployment and urban decay. We proposed to reemploy it as a structure that would celebrate its past and work as a nest for new and exciting activities which would infuse this northern community with optimism and hope.



Great Northern Palace of Play

**The Great Northern Railway Goods Warehouse was the largest of its kind in Europe.**

It had shipping canals built beneath it and above ground structures mighty enough to carry fully loaded freight trains at multiple levels. This dilapidated structure had once been the hub of northern commerce and industry. As a teenager I worked as a painter renovating Miss Tweed's Academy of Ballet housed inside its long Victorian streetscape. Our idea was simply to transform the existing structure into a vast and vital cultural entertainment resource center, moving parts of the national

museum treasures from London to the North. Our plans were detailed ready to go, the audience was there, and the economics were sound.

**In the 1980's we tried to purchase the derelict Central Station in Manchester**

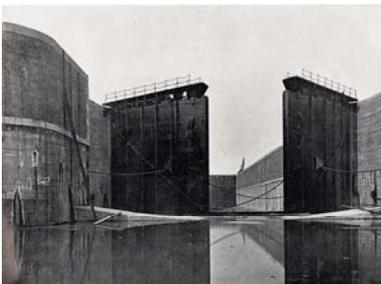
and transform this wonderful glass structure into a northern theme park to be sheltered beneath its vast glass roof protected from the rainy weather that made Manchester famous. Unfortunately we were too late: six months earlier a deal had been signed with Thatcher's Central Government to rip off its glass roof and replace it with a solid roof that turned this Paxton engineered cathedral of light into a dark and damp exhibition hall.



Manchester Central Station

**As a design group we are aware of the climatic changes that are threatening the very existence of our species.**

The European Community has designated Liverpool as its city of culture for 2008.

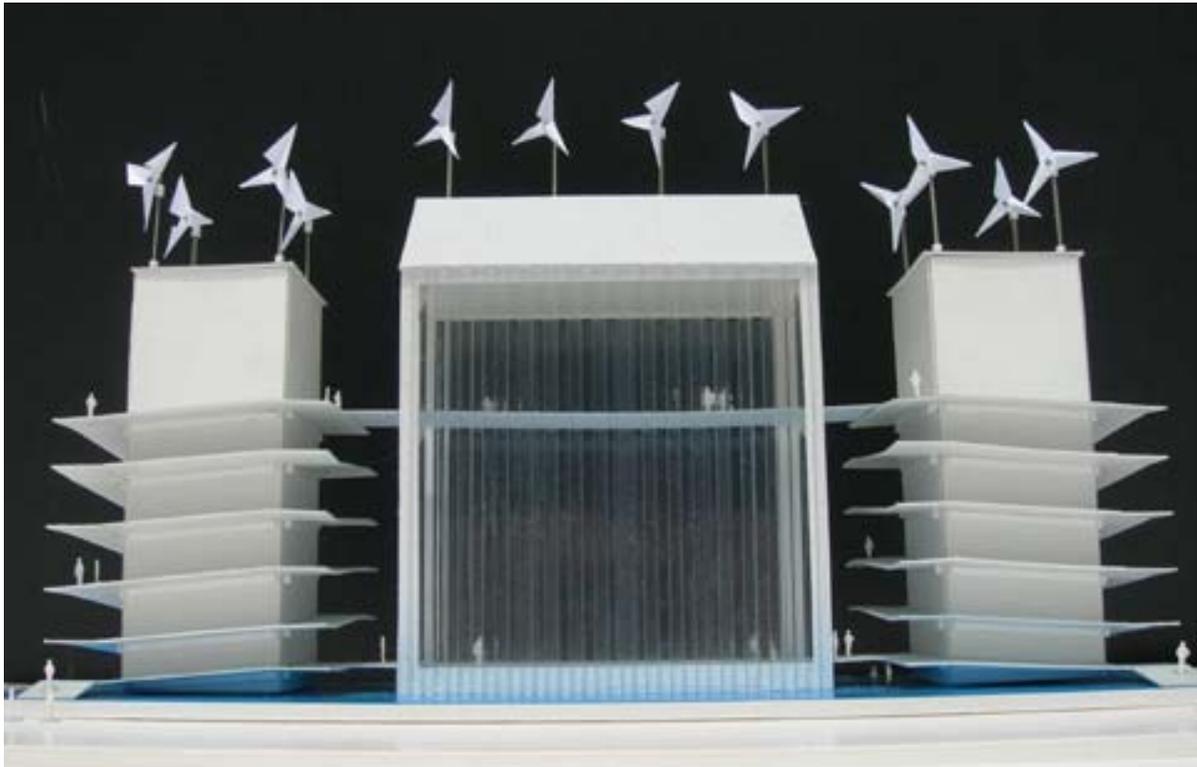


Eastham Lock

Having detail engineering knowledge of the Manchester Ship Canal we proposed, as part of the 2008 celebrations, to redeploy the existing infrastructure of the canal into a series of filtration basins so that when the canal concluded its 37 mile journey into the mouth of the Mersey the water flowing out would be clean and living, a powerful symbolic environmental gesture for the whole European Community.

The concept was not considered; perhaps it was not glamorous enough.

So we moved forward and designed The Ocean Filter Attraction. Powered by the sun, water and wind the Ocean Filter Attraction will return clean living water into the ocean, employing existing technology. **As an attraction it would rival Niagara Falls, seed new industries and become a symbol of hope in our environmentally troubled times.** The central tower is the attraction. The experience would be like walking behind Niagara Falls. The toxins would be removed at the basement level and then reintroduced into an industrial process engineered to the concept of reuse.



Ocean Filter Attraction - Liverpool 2008

Imagine, none of these dreams would have been dreamt, had I not been dipped by the midwife into buckets of warm water and then cold water, had my granny Elsie not fallen in love with me, had I not met my wife and partner Rosemarie Duell, who together with Len Rydahl made us the most imaginative design partnership on the planet.