

## OBITUARY

### DENNIS CROMPTON (1935–2025)

Dennis was an architect and a member of the leading experimental architecture group, Archigram. He and I met in 1968, became friends and were colleagues at the Architectural Association (AA) School of Architecture for a number of years. A highlight was when one Friday afternoon he came into my office and asked if I would like to go to Australia the next Tuesday to give the closing address to their annual Architectural Convention. We left as requested, gave several lectures, tutorials and the closing address on the final day. The next morning we flew back to the UK across the Pacific, Dennis alighting in San Francisco to make an Archigram presentation. Back at the AA hardly anybody knew we had been away.

This sort of travel typified the marvellous way Dennis spent a lot of his time. Included in his agenda were various exhibitions and conferences both for Archigram and the Magic Lantern Society, many at short notice and often in partnership with Patricia Dugdale. In addition to this kind of spontaneity Dennis just happened to respond positively to my invitation to join the MLS in the first place and went on to set up the slide and video library. His role in the background of most Society gatherings was invaluable. His recordings of the meetings, establishment of the journal and work on the other publications made a major contribution to the history of the Society. It has been the greatest pleasure to have known him well and for so many years. He will be greatly missed.

**Tony Dugdale**

Dennis and I were MLS Committee members at the same time for nearly 40 years. Over that length of time you get to know someone well and Dennis became a good friend as well as a respected Committee member. In the formative years of the Society Dennis was a tower of strength, ensuring all the Society communications were of the highest standard and our publications were up there with the best in the business. His influence can still be seen today with the many publications he has been involved with. Through his connections with the Architectural Association (AA) he also provided the Society with a 'London home'. The early Society International Conventions were all held at the AA and these events are truly part of the history of the Society and would not have happened without Dennis. He was a staunch supporter of all Society activities and could be relied on to be there whenever needed. On a more personal level Dennis helped me to launch my three *Show People* books – he had this extraordinary knack of turning a file of images and a file of text into a wonderful coffee table reference book. For his work on these three books I will always be grateful.

Dennis – you will be missed by many.

**Mike Smith**

**George Auckland writes:**

I first became fully aware of Dennis in 1983, at the first MLS International Convention. Little did I know at the time that Dennis and his various activities for the MLS would also become a large part of my own life. At the first Convention Dennis, assisted by his young son Daniel, video recorded the whole weekend's events. Having spent my whole working life at the BBC, I was intrigued by what he was doing and how. Dennis did many things for the Society. Older members will no doubt have many examples of his graphics and publishing skills in their own collection, but I will concentrate on other significant aspects. From 1984 onwards he video recorded virtually every MLS meeting. It is a massive archive of mainly VHS tapes all carefully catalogued and stored.

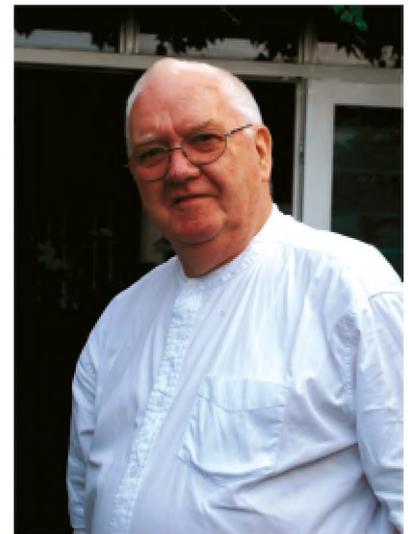
As part of his working life Dennis put on many stylish and innovative exhibitions all over the world so sometimes he had to miss an MLS meeting. As I came to know Dennis better he would ask me to record a meeting when he was away. I started to help him more and more with the technical side of the Conventions. About ten years ago Dennis asked if I would take over the recording and editing completely. After a few very pleasant lunches at his favourite pizza restaurant in Soho we had it all sorted – or so I thought. The shock came when we collected the archive from his house. The boxes of tape and computer hard drives filled our car. Working through the material is a slow labour of love but it is a great tribute to Dennis that



we have such an archive. Very few organisations have such a living history. Bless you Dennis – a true professional.

**Mary Ann Auckland writes:**

I worked with Dennis on early editions of *The Magic Lantern* when I handed over a bundle of edited articles and they magically became a glossy magazine in remarkably short time. Eventually in 2018 I took over the production too, with Dennis's firm reassurance that everything would be fine, and realised the amount of work behind the magic. But this was only part of what Dennis did for the MLS – George had taken on another part with the recordings and only between us could we manage! Jerry Fisher reminded me how pivotal Dennis was to the Society from the early years on by designing and dealing with the printing of the newsletter, journal and books (look at the *Encyclopaedia of the Magic Lantern*, for example), by providing the AA as a venue for the first five Conventions, as well as meetings and committee meetings, and by recording the presentations. Altogether he was a truly remarkable person and that was brought home to me when he kindly invited us to the launch of *Archigram: The Book* in 2018. We were slightly confused by the concept of a group of architects who did not appear to build buildings but then, by speaking to other practitioners there and seeing the extraordinary ideas in the book, we understood how they inspired generations of architects.



*Dennis was born in Blackpool and studied architecture at the University of Manchester. After graduating he moved to London and worked for the London County Council and then the Architectural Association. In 1961 he co-founded the Archigram magazine which led to the formation of the highly influential Archigram group. He was the main archivist and technician for the group – a role he also fulfilled for many years with the Magic Lantern Society as well as producing its publications. Dennis leaves his wife Betty and children Catherine and Daniel (who was his technical assistant from the first MLS Convention onwards).*