



Leslie Bilby - Joint Managing Director: SPAN

Pioneer builder and developer of modernist schemes

Leslie Bilby was born in Spalding, Lincolnshire. He attended evening classes at Regent Street Polytechnic where he studied painting. However his interests turned towards architecture and design and he went to work for a builders merchants in London. In 1937 he set up his own building company working for Connell, Ward and Lucas, Wells Coates, Denys Lasdun, Patrick Gwynne and Erno Goldfinger.

After serving as an infantry officer during the War he worked for architect turned developer Charles Henry Brown completing restoration and conversion work on a number of properties on the Cator Estate, Blackheath. One property, The Paragon, consisted of a crescent of fourteen houses. Each of the houses were converted into flats and the individual gardens were unified into one complete landscape.

As a resident of the Paragon, Bilby formed an association of leaseholders who were responsible for the maintenance of the building and landscaping. As secretary of the association Bilby was responsible for collecting subscriptions. After purchasing land in Blackheath, Bilby joined Townsend and Henry Cushman to form Priory Hall Ltd. in 1954. Townsend, Cushman and Bilby (who gave up all his outside business interests) formed SPAN Developments Ltd. in 1957. Within the SPAN organisation Bilby's responsibilities included buying land, generating ideas and concepts. His chief ambition was to provide SPAN with the opportunity to get involved in a large scale comprehensive development.