



Ready for take-off: John Dearing in front of the de Havilland Dragon Rapide and, right, his view of the London Eye during the flight.

High over London on the wings of a Dragon

By John Dearing

One Friday last month I flew from Duxford aerodrome in Cambridgeshire on a thrilling trip over Central London in a de Havilland Dragon Rapide, a biplane airliner built in 1946 and now operated by Classic Wings.

The Dragon Rapide was designed in the mid-1930s, and soon gained a reputation as a comfortable and reliable short-haul passenger plane. From the modern perspective, it is small and cramped, but once its eight passengers are seated, they are quite comfortable.

After the safety briefing, we embarked and within a few short minutes we had taken off. The plane is quite noisy, and moves around in the sky more than a modern jet airliner, but this is all part of the experience and is quite exciting, without being in any way threatening.

From Duxford we flew more or less due south. The first part of the trip was over open fields and country towns, then the London landmarks came thick and fast, viewed from not much higher than the top of the Shard.

Looping over London

We passed over the Olympic Park in East London, making a number of loops over central London and passing by the Thames Barrier, London City Airport, the Emirates Airline cable car, the Isle of Dogs, the Millennium Dome, Tower Bridge, the London Eye, County

Hall and the Houses of Parliament, before returning to Duxford. In all, the trip was about 75 minutes.

The rest of the day was spent viewing the numerous static aircraft exhibits in the many hangars. All together it was a very memorable day.

Noel Lynch, local shopkeeper and hard-working politician

Noel Lynch, much-loved shopkeeper, local politician and founder member of The Archer, died last month at the age of 74. Here his wife Diane Burstein Lynch and, below, fellow Archer founder and former editor, Kevin Finn pay tribute to a man of many talents.

My husband Noel Lynch made his mark wherever he went with his kindness, compassion and quiet intelligence. Born in Kilmallock, County Limerick, Noel was the son of a farmer but the agricultural life was not for him.

Trained as an auctioneer, he set out to make his mark in local politics in Ireland and then in London, the city which was his home since 1986 when he travelled to England to get a divorce, which was illegal in Ireland at the time.

An active member of the London Green Party, Noel rose through the ranks to take a seat in the London Assembly in 2003. As an Assembly member he sat on several committees including the Metropolitan Police Authority, the Culture, Sport and Tourism Committee and he was chair of the Standards Committee.

His many campaigns included such important issues as preservation of green spaces, increased provision of public toilets and the championing of small local shops, but the achievement he was most proud of was saving the Cricklewood Homeless Centre, a place that had provided a London refuge

for many of his countrymen.

On leaving the Assembly, Noel continued his dedicated involvement with Green politics by becoming the party's London Coordinator, spending most evenings travelling all over London to attend meetings of the local branches.

Away from politics, Noel worked as freelance auctioneer and ran the Green Room, a North London shop supporting Green causes. Latterly in North Finchley's Tally Ho Corner and Archway, the Green Room was situated for many years in East Finchley and during that time Noel, who lived above the shop, became involved in local matters and was one of the founder members of *The Archer*. Described in *Time Out* as "London's most unusual charity shop" the Green Room sold everything from phrenology heads to sharks teeth. In his spare time Noel was a voracious reader of factual books and he loved running general knowledge quizzes for various charities and, latterly, to entertain friends and family via Facebook Live during lockdown.

And what of his original reason for coming to England to get that divorce? After a long period of single life Noel

found love again in 2012 when we met and enjoyed nine very happy years together. He is survived by me, his daughter Michelle, granddaughter Tejah, son-in-law Telai and brothers Liam, Tim and Patrick and their families.

Kevin Finn writes:

Noel Lynch was a founder member of *The Archer* in 1993, alongside Paul Savill, Andrew Taylor and myself. Noel had an antiques and curiosity shop in East Finchley before moving to 'The Green Room' in Archway and then to the Arcade in Tally Ho. All proceeds from his shops went to charity and Noel's avid interest and activity with the Green Party was openly publicised and discussed.

My personal memories of Noel include his joy of showing and discussing the miscellaneous items he had on sale, his quick and dry wit and sense of humour and his enthusiasm to assist wherever he could.

Born in County Limerick in the Republic of Ireland, Noel came to England to get a divorce as this was illegal in his home country.



An active life: Noel Lynch

He held a seat for the Greens through the list system at City Hall for a year in 2003, stepping up when Victor Anderson resigned, and he was highly respected by his colleagues. In just one year he is said to have written four reports covering plastic bags, local shops, the decline of public toilets and the need for green spaces, a man ahead of his time for sure.

Once at an auction he was leading, he advised my wife and me that a particular lot, a cardboard box full of all sorts of things, would be worth watching

as it contained a few nice bits and pieces. We bid on it and bought it for about £5 only to find out that it didn't have much of any value whatsoever. Noel looked at us both with a gleam in his eye and a wry smile and said: "I told you to watch it, not buy it!" So typical of the man.

The last time we met Noel was in the Arcade in Tally Ho, about a year ago, where amongst the normal craziness of his stock, was the usual cheerful and chatty Noel that I will always remember and, of course, miss. Rest in peace, Noel.