George Jasieniecki
1947-2026

George was born to first generation Polish refugees in 1947 and lived in the family home in Redcliffe Street, London SW10.

They led the typical life of such folk working hard. At some point they operated the refreshment stand at Earls Court station. His father died prematurely at the end of the 1960s and his mother subsequently lived a very quiet life made worse by her poor command of English. More than once on answering the telephone she would reply with duplicative accuracy “George is not in; he is out”.

George was staunchly British, bi-lingual of course, and because of the nature of the Polish language it was hard to know whether they were conversing or arguing.

He was an expert graphic designer employed for many years at CAP Group in Lambs Conduit Street as their chief in-house designer. This pre-dates any form of desktop publishing; it employed extensive use of Letraset, Cow Gum, and Rotring drawing tools.

As such his wide transport interests were slanted to printed materials, posters, signs, destination blinds and the like. He was an early student of the history of London’s transport typography now widely exploited. He would also claim not to be interested in buses – ‘just where they go’. He had an extraordinary collection of London transport ephemera – not all obtained legitimately. For him to possess the physical evidence was the nearest he could to have proof.

It might be said he was never satisfied and his pursuit of absolute accuracy was both a blessing and a curse. At best projects were late and at worst never completed.

His brain worked on the basis of literal communication. He would spontaneously laugh out loud – for example at the narrow pedestrian door at Edgware Bus Station which had a sign ‘WAY OUT FOR BUSES’ when quite clearly you couldn’t get a bus through there. I recall long conversations as to what the first thing you should say upon answering the telephone (of which he had a large collection). He would argue that saying your number was pointless as you had yourself just dialled it. Consequently he would conclude the right opening word was ‘Listening…..’

Redcliffe Street housed several tenants over the years. It was also the home of the newsletter production Gestetner duplicator that printed the London Omnibus Traction Society’s newsletter. George was a committee member there and also at the London Underground Railway Society. In the fullness of time he would have his membership of both terminated. He became especially disillusioned with clubs and societies generally as he regarded their behaviours not serious enough and guilty of publishing sub-standard material.

His own memberships increased in gravity. He was a supporter of the National Association for Freedom (now The Freedom Association). Where others joined more traditional organisations he joined The Ephemera Society; others were eager to join CAMRA whereas he joined the Society for the Preservation of Beer from the Wood.

Along with many of his contemporaries from LOTS he was one of the co-owners of RTW467 – the last of his class in London service. He enjoyed that this set him apart from others in his larger circle and helped raise his more individual personality. This was reinforced specifically when he would pay his contribution to the bus's upkeep in bags of coins scavenged from the payphone he had installed at Redcliffe Street.

He was the first person I knew with an ex-Directory telephone number and the only person I knew to send Telegrams until they were discontinued in 1982. He won an argument with the Post Office as to whether his 9-digit London telephone number was charged as one word or three.

In 1973 he published Development of the London Bus 1929-1933 written by Gavin Martin. This was the only imprint of his West Farthing Grange publishing enterprise. Of course he fell out with the author and it took until 1990 for it to be republished, this time by Ian Allan. Later he invested in a revolutionary new typesetting machine for his freelance work which gave him a competitive edge until Microsoft and Apple put much better equipment in hands of amateurs.

He had a particular love of the county of Shropshire – the countryside, the topography, the beer and the abandoned railways. We discovered the secret location of one of the Emergency Control Trains (together they would be brought out from hiding to form a communications net in the event of nuclear war), and, on a separate trip, we found the only surviving Dartford Tunnel Cycle Bus from 1963 and now in preservation. Only on one occasion and in fading light did we need to be escorted to safety from The Long Mynd.

As a staunch monarchist he wanted to have his own tribute to HM The Queen's Silver Jubilee. So he recreated the window bill used on buses at the Coronation which read LONG LIVE THE QUEEN. We forged the London Transport internal poster fixing instruction form and delivered them to bus garages in the middle of the night in the proper brown envelopes identified with blue crayon. The following morning every one of the 25 Silver Jubilee Routemasters had them fixed and several internal LT memos between departments claimed credit for the 'initiative'.

Over time his circle of friends shrank and he spent more time alone. Some of this was spent in serious research but it has to be acknowledged this increased isolation led towards semi-exile. One by one the tenants at Redcliffe Street moved out and increasing proportions of the house were filled with materials he had collected. Those of us who remained friends stopped being invited in.

He was affected by the death of a long-standing friend and fellow graphic artist Bibi Freeman, whose son Robert was his godson.

In the last few years of his life there is no doubt that his attitude mellowed and he was more sociable. When he required triple heart by-pass surgery a few friends were very supportive and he was equally grateful. He attended more events personally, although with declining mobility and engaged in collaborative research more readily.

I doubt if anyone could really say they knew him well. But we would all acknowledge that he helped us develop our mindset; we would more energetically try and separate facts from opinion; he showed us how to query everything and never jump to conclusions; and we would cease to trust facts presented just because they were in print. 'Question everything' he would say.

He was especially guarded even in ordinary conversation and therefore was something of an enigma and person of mystery. I think he relished that. As well as a great mind he also possessed a fine sense of humour (something he would deny) although it must be said that it was perversity, unusual behaviours and the consequences of literal interpretation that triggered laughter – certainly not traditional storytelling. He was amused by British radio comedy of the 1960s which led to avant garde humour and the breakthrough of satire.

He was found unresponsive at home after several days of failed contact. He leaves no family of his own. Instead he leaves behind the fruits of significant research, the indelible mark he left on so many of us during our formative years, and a memory of a man who managed to be authoritative and annoying in equal measure. He always left you with a puzzle – even at the end. Not only did we never really know him, because of his self-imposed exile we will also never know on which day he died.

