

## **A Tribute to Prof Tony Ridley CBE <sup>1</sup>**

**1933-1926**

By Miles Shepherd



*Image: The Guardian*

I first met Tony Ridley in 2001 when I chaired my first Annual General Meeting of the Association of Project Managers (APM), as we were then called. Tony had a spectacular reputation as an engineer, effective committee man, academic and an innovator. On that occasion, I was almost overwhelmed by his insistence that APM needed to change. He had been closely involved with my predecessor in setting up The Change Project (TCP) which had stalled with the unexpected change of Chair a month or so before the AGM. He proved to be a staunch President, encouraging, questioning and a steady hand on tiller when needed.

Tony had been closely involved in major engineering projects all his life but is probably best known for delivering complex public transport systems across the UK and internationally. He was the visionary figure behind the Tyne and Wear Metro, helping to transform urban mobility in North East England before working his magic managing director of the Hong Kong Mass Transit Railway Corporation. Thus it is hardly surprising that he was invited to become an Honorary Fellow of APM in 1997 and later President of APM from 2000-2003.

Tom Taylor, my successor as Chair of APM and later President, knew Tony and commented:

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*I got to know Tony Ridley as one of the vice Presidents who were previous Chairs and Presidents arising from the constitutional changes at APM in mid 2000s.*

*While he was in the later parts of his careers, he was alive and awake to what was happening and so was invaluable in his contributions. He did not have to say much but it was always worth listening to. This might appear to be about his collected experience but his wisdom, personality and drive clearly showed through from an early age.*

*When I became President of APM we went to lunch so I could pick up some tips and directions from a sage. He made me promise that if I felt his contributions were no longer appropriate that I should say so and he would resign his vice President position. I never found that necessary.*

*He was a good guy and good supporter with good humour.*

Prof Tony Ridley was one of the most distinguished engineers of his generation with a career that spanned UK and all over the world; he had worked in the United States as a foundations design engineer, was a site engineer for the construction of Bradwell nuclear power station and a design engineer for the Knutsford Nuclear Power Group. Early in his career, he had been chief research officer for the highways and transport department of the Greater London Council. He was a director of Halcrow Fox, consulting engineers between 1992 and 2004, of the Major Projects Association between 1995 and 2009 and of the RAC Foundation from 1995 to 2010. He was also an advisor on transport to the United Nations.

Tony Melville Ridley was born in Sunderland and attended Durham School before graduating with a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Newcastle. His education had links with universities in the United States including Northwestern University, Illinois; the University of California and Stanford University. He was awarded a PhD for his dissertation on the evaluation of transport investment. In UK, he was Head of the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering at Imperial College London in the late 1990s and still maintained an emeritus professorship in the department.

His many achievements were recognised when he was appointed a Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE) in 1986. In 1987 he won the Institution Prize of the Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation. He played an important role in making the London 2012 Olympics a success by serving as senior transport adviser for the Olympic bid.

His institutional career was both distinguished and varied. As well as his role with APM, he was a Fellow of the Royal Academy of Engineering and was appointed a director of the Chartered Institute of Logistics & Transport in 1991, serving in that role until 1993 and for a later stint between 1999 and 2001. He served as president of the Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE) from March 1995 to November 1996, following the death in office of

Edmund Hambly. He served out the remainder of Hambly's term as well as the usual 12 months in office, becoming the first person to do so since 1961. In June 1995 he called an extraordinary meeting of the ICE Council at its London headquarters to discuss the future of the loss-making *New Civil Engineer* magazine. The council met in a closed session for the first time in its history, with the room being cleared of all observers and the secretariat leaving only the voting members. The sale of *New Civil Engineer* and the institution's specialist engineering magazines to Emap was agreed later that month – though the ICE retained control of its book and journal publications.

Perhaps the last word should be about his formative time in Newcastle.

The chairman of Newcastle City Council's traffic and transport committee stated *"He is a very brainy backroom boy, well versed in the theory of transport. It will be interesting to see how he deals with the management of a very large transport undertaking as he has had no management experience whatever, or experience of financial control. We wish him well, however"*. When the idea of a Tyneside metro system was first presented to him in 1971, Ridley is famed for saying "You'll never get away with it". But he oversaw both the development of the metro plans, which linked decaying rail lines using city centre tunnels and a bridge over the River Tyne, and the successful bid for Government funding.

Tony Melville Ridley was born on 10 November 1933 died in March 2026, at the age of 92.

The APM tribute to Tony can be found at <https://www.apm.org.uk/news/tributes-paid-to-former-apm-president-professor-tony-ridley/>

A lot of factual information about Tony Ridley is on Wikipedia at [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tony\\_Ridley](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tony_Ridley)

The best resume may be on the BBC website at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cvgz32lprjxo>

## About the Author



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**Dr. Miles Shepherd** is an executive editorial advisor and international correspondent for the *PM World Journal* in the United Kingdom. He retired from a 30 year career in the British Army in 1994. He is also managing director for MS Projects Ltd, a consulting company supporting various UK and overseas Government agencies, nuclear industry organisations and other businesses. Miles has over 35 years' experience on a variety of projects in UK, Eastern Europe and Russia. His PM experience includes defence, major IT projects, decommissioning of nuclear reactors, nuclear security, rail and business projects for the UK Government and EU. His consulting work has taken him to Japan, Taiwan, USA and Russia. Past Chair and Fellow of the Association for Project Management (APM), Miles is also past president and chair and a Fellow of the International Project Management Association (IPMA). He was, for seven years, a Director for PMI's Global Accreditation Centre and is past Chair of the ISO committee developing new international standards for Project Management and for Program/Portfolio Management. He served on British Standards Institute project management committee (2002 – 2026) including 5 years as Chair. He was involved in setting up APM's team developing guidelines for project management oversight and governance. Miles is based in Salisbury, England and can be contacted at [miles.shepherd@msp-ltd.co.uk](mailto:miles.shepherd@msp-ltd.co.uk).