

New York at night comes to Orleans House

A local rough is one of the secrets of success according to veteran photographer George Edwards whose exhibition of frames he took in 1960 in New York opens at Orleans House in September.

George, now 86, was working for Kress and Bonham at the time and had gone to America to take industrial photographs of stands at the British Exhibition - with his glamorous assistant Sara, an actress, at his side.

"The exhibition was pretty standard commercial stuff", says George who lives in Queens Road, Teddington. "So to develop my creative instinct I became a professional amateur and used to wander off at night and take candid shots of New Yorkers walking in the streets, the skyscrapers and the general ambience.

"I trained to take them without people being aware of me. I was able to have my knee jitters reflex ring around my shoulder as it had a viewfinder that you

could look down into without drawing attention to yourself. I would stand quietly waiting for the right moment and then crouch lowly to cover the click of the shutter. It worked really very well.

At the time I picked out the best but got most of the other negatives in an envelope in the back of a drawer.

Then when I was looking through some stuff the other day I came across them and with some excitement from my wife realised they were actually very good and worth printing and exhibiting.

Justy now sits on, Sara, now 75 who trained at RAIMA with the likes of Sheila Hancock and Joan Collins, is still at her husband's side supporting him but with varied and illustrious careers of her own.

She was a Conservative councillor in Teddington a couple of decades back but in recent years her considerable energies have been devoted to the artistic life of the borough.

Still as energetic and active as she was in the days when her face was seen in popular tv commercials, she remains a key member of Richmond upon Thames Arts Council. She was chairman when the drama awards, which are sponsored by the Richmond and Twickenham Times, were launched.

She also got the popular literary lectures off the ground.

She is also a keen historian and professional lecturer and guide, covering such subjects as Kensington Palace, New Palace, Hogarth House and Hampton Court.

She was presented with an OBE for Services Award by then Mayor Anne Summers after launching herself into a new career as a lecturer by doing an Open University course in furniture and history when she was in her mid sixties.

The couple met back in the fifties when George was exhibiting on his career in photography the great job to run his own

studio in Baker Street and was working at a holiday camp in Marylebone with assignments like Kitchley Lane competitions and Donkey Derby. Sara had found herself entertaining there with Jackson Girls dance troupe - and it was love at first sight.

They discovered Richmond a few years later when they decided to have a family and wanted somewhere more suitable than the Baker Street flat where they were living at the time.

Sara by then was well established in the theatre and had enjoyed a long run at the Adelphi Theatre with Dora Bryan and Ronald Shiner's *Lovebirds*.

Her face was also very well known as she featured in numerous commercials selling everything from coffee to sunglasses.

"We really wanted to live in Primrose Hill but could not afford it so settled for Strawberry Hill", she laughs. "And it was the best choice because this is a wonderful borough and we both love it

and always will."

The couple have one daughter Katie, who is married to a film cameraman and is in the business herself as a theatre production manager and they have a nine year old grandson.

George's health has deteriorated a bit in the last couple of years but they are still a formidable couple and their energy, talent and enthusiasm are infectious.

Both the Edwards agree their long lives have been happy and fulfilling - and they continue to contribute occasionally in the borough of Richmond upon Thames where they have lived for nearly four decades.

"It's funny how life turns out!" Sara muses. "When I was a teenager I really wanted to be an actress - but could not really sing. My second choice was teaching - so I had an actor I admired very much who taught.

"And I finished up as my maturity looking to study and children. Just what I had always wanted."