



MOURNED: Influential artist John Berry and a classic book cover, right

OBITUARY JOHN BERRY

Ladybird illustrator is known to generations of young book lovers

► John Berry's gentle pictures celebrate a bygone British era
► He also coined the famous Tiger in your Tank advertising slogan

TIM HARRISON

ARTIST John Berry – one of Hammersmith's most influential sons – has died at 89.

Though not a household name, his work is known to generations of young readers as the illustrator of Ladybird books.

Warm and reassuring, those pictures celebrate a gentler age of traffic-free London streets and rustic country cottages.

John was born in Hammersmith in June 1920. His father, a foreman on the railway in the borough, left home when he was five, and he and his sister were raised by his mother.

At 14 he became a pupil at Hammersmith College of Art in Brook Green, later winning a scholarship to the Royal Academy.

That move was blocked by the outbreak of the Second World War, when he was appointed as an official war artist.

After the war he began to work as a book illustrator, but it was a fateful trip to return an art book to Hammersmith Library in Shepherds Bush Road that changed his life.

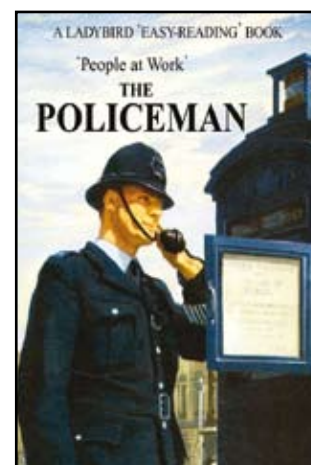
"I spotted a gorgeous creature [June East] who was a librarian," he recalled.

"We got pretty friendly. She asked: 'Do you like Picasso?' Well, she couldn't have said anything worse. I said: 'No, love.' What I meant to say was: 'I'll pick you up at one o'clock.' I got tongue-tied, but it was all right. We got married!"

They had five children.

Between book commissions, John worked for advertising agencies. In 1951, while working for Astral Arts in central London, he was asked to draw a tiger for Esso.

He drew a friendly, grinning animal leaping towards the filler cap of a car. The executives loved it. While they chatted, he



He made the remark: Put a tiger in your tank, eh?"

made the off-the-cuff remark "Put a tiger in your tank, eh?"

It became one of the most famous slogans of the 20th century... earning John the princely one-off fee of £25.

He joined Ladybird in 1960, illustrating the *Ladybird Book of London*.

That led to a 20-year relationship with the famous children's book publisher, with John providing the evocative images for 37 books, from *The Fireman* and *The Policeman* in 1962 to *Hannibal on the Nature Trail* in 1978.

His illustrations for the 17 books in the People At Work series involved 480 watercolours. Today, those nostalgic images of bygone Britain command high prices at auction.

In 1986, June died. Three years later he married Jessie Showell, who survives him.

He spent his later life living in Hatton, Derbyshire, and many of his Ladybird original paintings are displayed at the Driffold Gallery, Sutton Coalfield.

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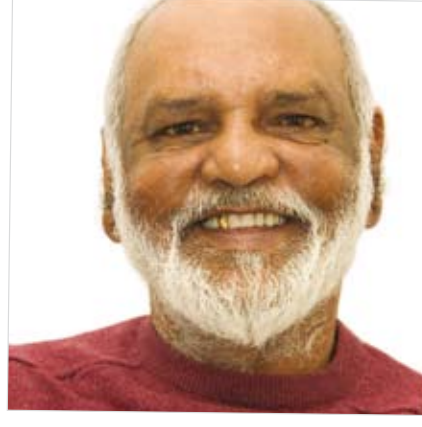
NHS

Hammersmith and Fulham



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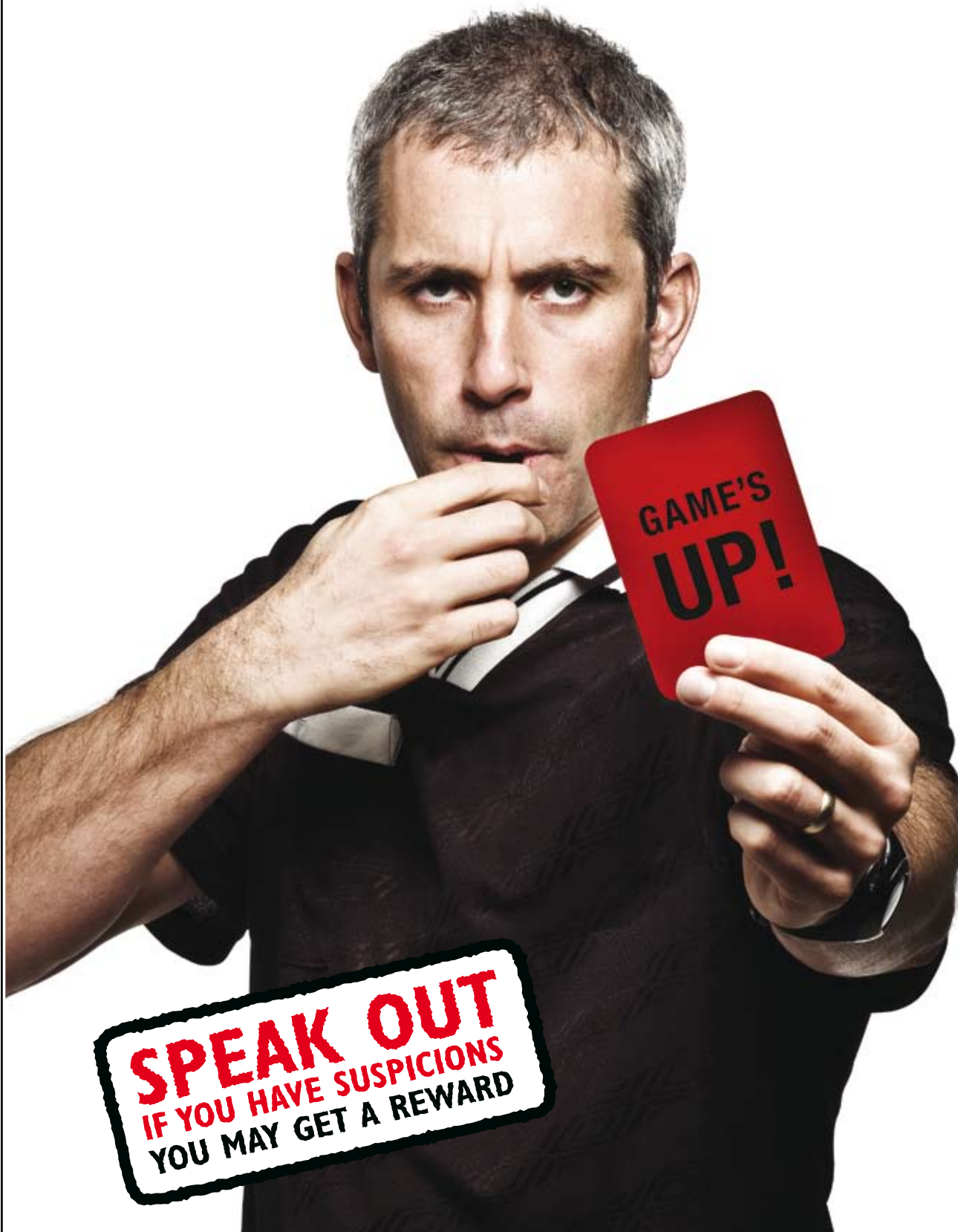
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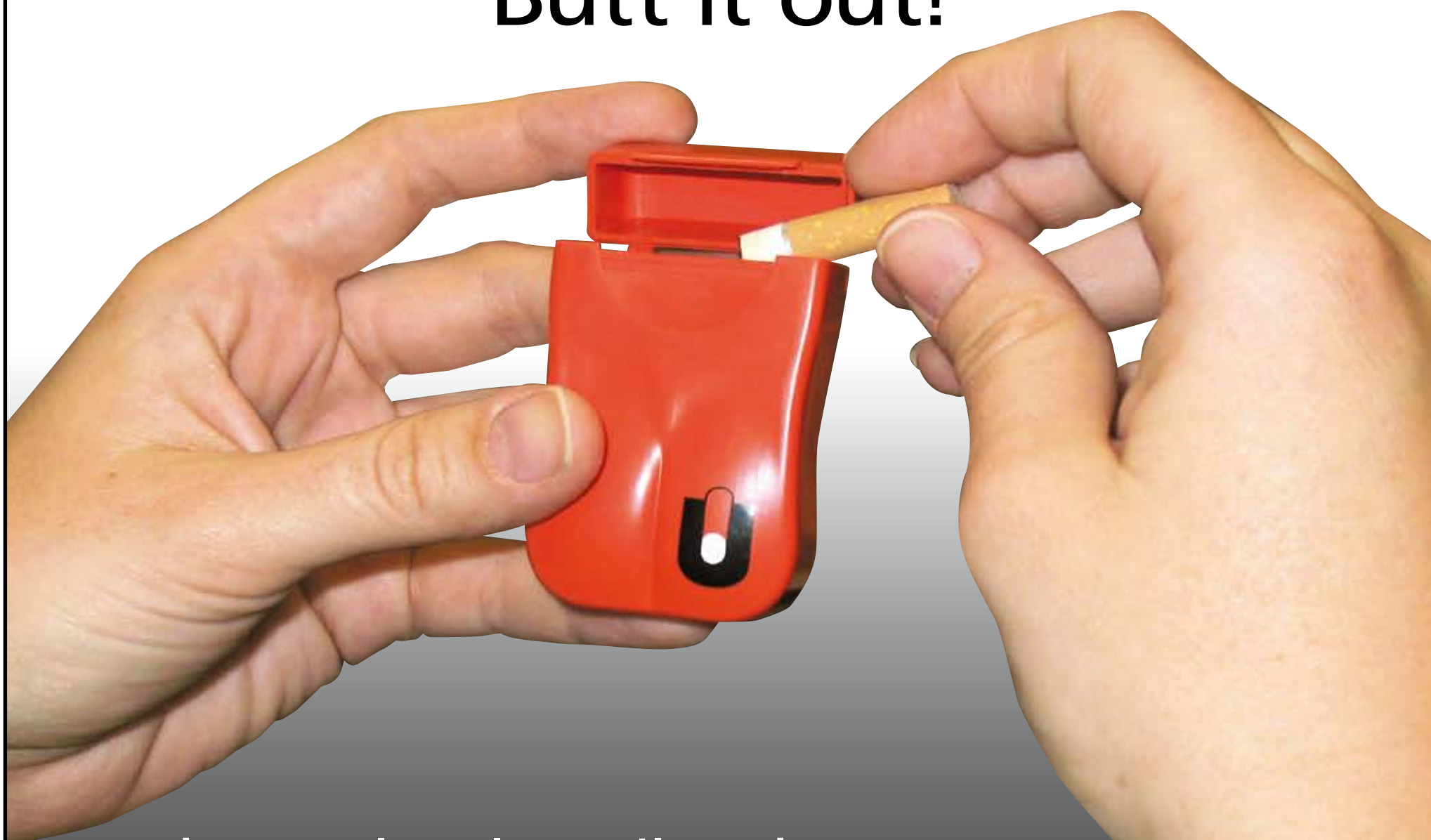
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