

## John Morton (1935 – 2021)

### A tribute

What was it about John that we all liked and admired? Nice bloke? Valuable, active member of our Club? The interesting anecdotes? The wit? The humour? The unstoppable ability to do so much so well?

John Morton was educated at Merchant Taylors School near Northwood, Middlesex. Through the RAF section of the Combined Cadet Force he won a flying scholarship and gained a Private Pilot's Licence before he could drive a car. He was commissioned during National Service in the RAF and trained as a pilot on piston Provosts and Vampires. He joined British European Airways in January 1956 flying Herons, then Viscounts, Comets, Boeing 707s and Lockheed Tristars. He was granted his first command in 1967 and culminated his career as a Route Training Captain. During 37 years he logged some 17,600 flying hours covering an estimated 8 million miles. His experiences led to a book in 2002 *Whatever were you thinking of, Captain? A handbook for airline passengers*, written about all aspects of flying, interspersed with his own brand of humour.

Believing that his Queens Scout Certificate was a major factor in his being selected for aircrew training he tried to put something back into Scouting. He gave 25 years of service to the organisation and was District Commissioner for Horsham in the 1980s. In later life after he moved to Gloucestershire he offered his services to the Scouting Movement there. During his lifetime in Scouting he amassed a huge world-wide scout badge collection. His proudest moment in scouting was when he was chosen to lay a wreath at the Cenotaph on Armistice Day.

He joined Horsham Geological Field Club in the mid-1990s and in his busy retirement he took up academic study as well and gained a BSc in General Science, Astronomy, Geology and the History of Science with the Open University. He authored two geology related books: *Strata – How William Smith drew the first map of the Earth in 1801 and inspired the Science of Geology*, and *King of Siluria – how Roderick Murchison changed the face of Geology*. John became a Fellow of the Geological Society in 2001.

As a Club member he soon joined the Committee and offered to edit a magazine which he named *Stonechat*. He used his wit, and humour to make this a very entertaining publication. He passed the successful format on in June 2013 when he moved away. An archive of the magazine is kept in the Natural History Museum library. He supported all the Club's social activities and lectures, organised geological treasure hunts across Sussex plus an Industrial Archaeology walk through Ebernoe. After he moved away he also organised and led our marking of William Smith's bicentenary in 2015 with a trip to the Somerset Coal Canal.

He never slowed down. Every Christmas his newsletter for friends would arrive listing all the travels and activities he had experienced. An interesting life well lived, using all his remarkable abilities to the full.