

JOHN MORTON (1933-2018)

By Don Shields



A graduation photo of John Morton

John Dixon Morton was born in 1933 in Unthank, in the Eden Valley in northern England. He obtained his BSc in Geology from the University of Durham (1954) and did graduate work (MSc) in geotechnical/civil engineering at King's College, London. After a short time with the Royal Engineers in Suez, north-eastern Egypt, John immigrated to Canada in 1958.

In Canada, John initially worked with Wimpey Construction based in the Province of Québec. While stationed in Sept Iles, he met Claire Bush, from Montreal, and they married in 1961. After stints in other remote locations in Québec and in the Peace River Valley, AB, they settled in Toronto, where John joined William Trow Associates in 1962. He was appointed manager of the newly opened Trow office in Hamilton in 1965. A serious injury in 1969 brought a temporary halt to John's engineering career.

Upon his recovery in the early 1970s, John formed the geotechnical partnership, Morton Dodds and Associates. That firm carried out a number of high-profile tunnelling projects across both southern and northern Ontario during the 1970s. In 1976, he co-authored with K.Y. Lo (University of Western Ontario) the well-referenced *Canadian Geotechnical Journal* paper, "Tunnels in bedded rock with high horizontal stresses".

When Morton Dodds dissolved, John became a sole practitioner based in Toronto. He operated as such for many years and became well known worldwide for his expertise in tunnelling and mining. Something of a workaholic, he did not officially retire until his early 80s, after a 55-year career. He continued to be a keen planner of building projects many years into his retirement.

After the death of his wife in 2013, John moved to Victoria, BC, where he died on June 5, 2018, while living with his daughter, Wendy. He is also survived by his son, Thomas. Another son, Christopher, died in an accident in 2021.

John Morton was a well-regarded engineering geologist/geotechnical engineer. He brought a unique lens of a geologist to his practice, and he was an entertaining character.