

The Duke of Gloucester Gold Medal

John Bysouth - A Lifetime Achievement

John's career has been long and varied, but it has always been dedicated to the craft of stonemasonry and the development of the industry. He is well respected throughout the business and has been regarded as a mentor and supporter to many people over the years. 'Inspirational, good listener, confidante,' are just some of the things said about John. Others stress his ability to inspire, train and nurture people.

John Bysouth was born in 1937 and after attending Southgate County Grammar School, he gained a National Certificate of Building at Tottenham Technical College. He became an apprentice stonemason at the age of 17.

Between 1954 and 1958 he worked for Dove Brothers Ltd. In 1958, John joined his father in the family business, J Bysouth Ltd based in Tottenham, established in 1873.

The company was widely recognised for its high standards of workmanship in the stone industry, setting a benchmark for others to follow.

John found himself head of the company at an early age after the death of his father. Along with his sister Mary, he continued to grow and develop the business, employing and training many masons over the years.

John worked on many prestigious projects including the Houses of Parliament, St James's Palace, Woburn Abbey, Buckingham Palace, Windsor Castle and Winchester and Salisbury Cathedrals. New works included the completion of Guildford Cathedral and Brentwood Catholic Cathedral.

The company won Stone Federation's Natural Stone Awards on two occasions, in 1975 and 1993.

In 1994, John took up a new challenge when he became a stone consultant and technical adviser to Stone Federation, providing invaluable technical advice to the industry, architects, surveyors and clients. He also answered the majority of technical queries for the Federation dealing with very complex questions relating to the changing use of stone.

These countrywide enquiries covered a diverse and wide range of subjects and issues, everything from bathrooms to kitchen worktops, natural stone flooring, the selection of stone to cleaning and restoration. Memorably, one query called for

advice on how to clean away staining caused by horse urine half way up the stone wall in a converted stables!

John has held several offices connected with the natural stone industry and the craft over the years. Starting in 1968 as President of the London Association of Master Stonemasons which was established with the help of his father in 1909.

In 1980 he became President of the London Region of the Building Employers Confederation and in 1992-3 he was Master of The Worshipful Company of Masons.

John was elected President of Stone Federation in 1999. In recognition of all his hard work and support of Stone Federation, John was made a lifetime Honorary Member of the Federation.

He is still very much involved with the Federation: as the longest serving and respected member of the Technical Committee, as Chairman of the Membership and Subscription Working Party, overseeing the applications for membership, and as a member of the Stone Federation's Executive team.

He also developed and chaired the Use of Stone in Building Courses for many years, only standing down after completing the last one in September 2010. He is still instrumental in writing technical documents .

John has always championed masonry training over the years and he has been responsible for training many masons. Many of them have gone on to train masons themselves and John remains a mentor and sounding board to many of his former apprentices. John also originally assisted in the formation of NVQs for stonemasonry. He is still passionate about training and has judged a number of stone masonry competitions and Awards over the years including our own Natural Stone Craft Awards and the Duke of Gloucester Awards.

During all this time John has also found time to have a private life. He and his very understanding wife, Shelagh, have recently celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary. They have three children, David, Geoff and Claire, who between them have produced 11 grandchildren ranging in age from 4 to 22.

He has little time for hobbies but reads a wide range of books and also enjoys gardening. Unsurprisingly, he enjoys visiting stone buildings and quarries all over the country with Shelagh. In fact, she has become so knowledgeable about stone now that she can answer some of the technical questions posed without reference to John!

. ‘As a time-served mason, John’s knowledge of indigenous stones and the UK stone industry is unrivalled. His ability to understand the detail and work stone and his understanding of the methods of building with stone is exceptional’

Peter Harrison Liveryman and Design Consultant