

John helped put Capital on the map

John Bartholomew, cartographer and former director of the world renowned Edinburgh mapping business, John Bartholomew & Sons, dies aged 85.

BORN in Edinburgh on January 15, 1923, John Christopher Bartholomew was educated at St Trinnean's and Edinburgh Academy, then at Gordonstoun where he was a contemporary of Prince Philip.

He studied geography at Edinburgh University and had a keen interest in the natural sciences, including astronomy, meteorology, oceanography and geology. Later, he would become president of the Royal Scottish Geographical Society.

John, with his brothers Peter and Robert, were the last generation of the Edinburgh cartographic family to run the business of John Bartholomew & Son Ltd.

The firm traces its roots back to George Bartholomew who was born in 1784 and became an engraver apprenticed to Daniel Lizars in Edinburgh in 1797. His work was regarded in high esteem and included engraving a map of the city as it was in 1825.

Around 1826, his son, John Bartholomew, founded the firm that bears his name.

In the mid-19th century, Edinburgh became the atlas-producing capital of the world and companies such as Thomas Nelson, Chambers and Bartholomew headed a thriving industry. Their businesses grew as explorers found new lands and as the British Empire expanded.

Before John took over as director in 1951, he served a cartographic apprenticeship on the instruction of his father, who was also named John.

At this time, the business was very much in demand, supplying maps and atlases to buyers around the globe. John and his brothers maintained the firm's status until their retirement in 1980. It was at this time that Reader's Digest staged a successful buyout.

The business continued to produce the internationally renowned Times Atlas of the World, A to Z street plans and a huge variety of maps for customers across the world.

However, in 1995, it relocated from its Duncan Street premises in Newington to Glasgow, ending an association of almost 170 years with Edinburgh.

John lived near the Braid Hills in Edinburgh with his wife Ginette. The couple had five sons, John, Eric, Philip, Christopher, Patrick and Ivon, and 11 grandchildren.

Throughout his life, John travelled within six of the world's seven continents – the only place he didn't make it to was Antarctica.

Throughout his life, John gave lectures and talks and, as well as his books, he leaves behind hundreds of newspaper cuttings and hand-drawn maps.

These include a map of Edinburgh Zoo that became part of the official guide to the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland.

John died on January 16, 2008, aged 85. He is survived by his wife and sons.

The full article contains 443 words and appears in Edinburgh Evening News newspaper.

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