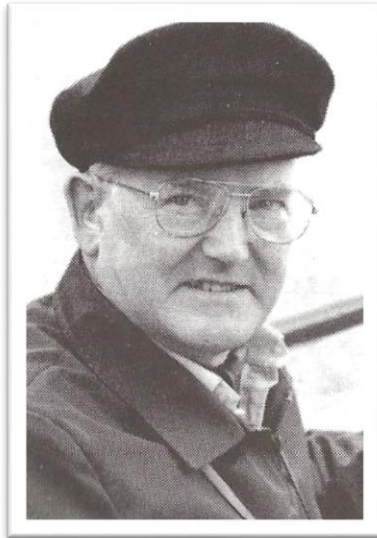


# John Morris Jones

John Morris Jones was born in Balsall Heath, Birmingham, on July 13th 1922. His father was a policeman who had been gassed and lost a leg in the First World War.

John went to Dennis Road School. When his father died from a chest infection as a result of having been gassed in the war, John went to live with his uncle in Sparkhill; from there he went to Yardley Grammar School.



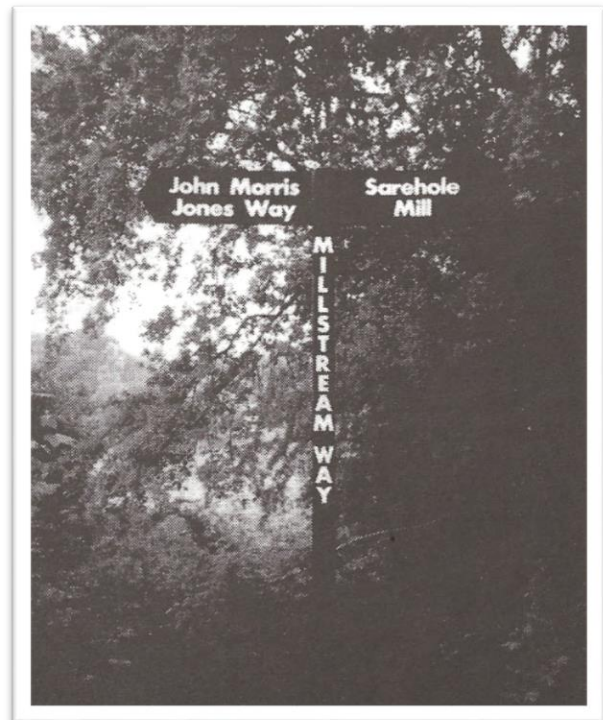
*John Morris Jones*

At the beginning of the Second World War, while waiting to be called into the Royal Air Force, John went to work for the Ministry of Food. Eventually he became a navigator in Liberator bombers; he trained in Canada, was commissioned, and saw service as a Flight Lieutenant in China, Burma and Viet Nam where he used maps drawn by Professor Thorpe of Birmingham University and Geographical Society of previously uncharted districts, which may have stimulated an early interest in cartography and helped him many years later in his map-making in Birmingham. One of his unforgettable memories was the jubilation of the people of Saigon as his 'plane circled overhead dropping leaflets which announced the Japanese surrender.

After the war John first went back to the Ministry of Food, but then took emergency teacher training at Bristol Road College. When he had finished his training, he taught at Yardley Wood and at that time met Joan while they both attended a course on Roman Britain. They married in 1956. Later he progressed from Yardley Wood to Park Hill School as Deputy Head and from there went as Head to George Dixon Junior School.

It was his strongly held belief that if you taught children about their heritage they would take better care of it, and with this aim in mind he considered ways of providing aids for teachers in junior schools. So he researched and wrote a number of pamphlets with specially made maps of local areas and this became an absorbing hobby of his. The Birmingham Central Library in its Local studies Department has a list of more than fifty booklets, articles, maps etc. all painstakingly researched and written by John over the years, with titles such as The Waters of Birmingham, Sarehole, Saltley and Little Bromwich, Maps of Birmingham, Mainly About Moseley, Manors of Aston Parish, Local Studies in Balsall Heath and Highgate etc. These were used in schools as well as local history groups and may well have been instrumental in inspiring the present flood of interest in Birmingham's past.

John was active in the Geographical Society and the Birmingham Archaeological Society as well as



*Signpost on Cole Valley Walk*

the Solihull Archaeological Group. He was much in demand as a lecturer and as leader of local groups, and was extremely generous, giving his time and assistance freely. He did a vast amount of research on the rivers Tame and Blythe and their tributaries the Rea and Cole, and on water mills around Birmingham.

When Birmingham opened a new nature walk by the banks of the River Cole, near Sarehole Mill - a region about which John had written and done considerable research - it was decided to call this very special walk in his honour the "John Morris Jones Way", and his widow Joan was invited to the official opening.

After John's early death in 1986 Joan gave all his booklets, maps and writings to the Local studies Section of the Birmingham Central Library where they are kept as the "John Morris Jones Collection".

*Hilde Smith*

Sources of information:

Birmingham Central Library;

Private communication from Mrs Joan Morris Jones.