

Morton Neal

Obituary



Morton Neal lived in Sarratt with his wife Cecilia for the past 60 years at Great Sarratt Hall, (co-incidentally near the area on Sarratt Green traditionally named Morton's Pond!) He was born 89 years ago, the grandson of Harry Neal, founder of the well regarded building firm of that name. Knowing his career would be within the family business,

Morton studied for and received a degree in Civil Engineering at Imperial College. Having enjoyed his time as a Flying Officer; during the then compulsory National Service, he met and married, in 1954, Cecilia. With his working life established in the family firm, the couple decided to move to Sarratt as the home for their growing family.

While encouraging Cecilia, his wife, to use her skills in Interior Design to enhance the house, Morton threw himself into turning the garden into a plantsman's paradise, full of highly unusual and rare plants and trees. This was to become a lifelong passion. The Sarratt Horticultural Society naturally attracted his interest and he was President for many years. He regularly entered his garden produce and more often than not was awarded a prize for his vegetables.

Meanwhile, having become Chairman of Harry Neal on the retirement of his father, Godfrey, he went on to acquire too many prestigious directorships and trusteeships to list here. But they included being a trustee of the Prince of Wales Institute of Architecture, being Chairman of the Connaught Hotel and a Director of the Savoy Board. The building that he said he was most proud of was the Chapter House at the Cathedral and Abbey Church of St Alban? And his personal interest in the Arts, shared with his wife, led him, as a Trustee, to organise the raising of sufficient funds for the Samuel Courtauld Institute to make its momentous move to Somerset House. As a liveryman of the Worshipful Company of Carpenters, he was delighted to become Master, a fitting office for someone responsible for the construction of so many domestic and commercial buildings in and around London. In 1991 he was awarded a CBE for his work in chairing the City & Guilds of London Institute over a 12 year period from 1979 - 1991. He fully appreciated the importance of vocational training in the many walks of life in which he had a hand. He was always thrilled when an apprentice or tradesman came up to him to tell him proudly that he, Morton, had signed his or her City & Guilds Certificate.

Away from work, Morton very much thought of himself as part, not only of Sarratt but of the Hertfordshire Community. He became High Sheriff of Hertfordshire in 1999-2000. He subsequently became President of the Hertfordshire Agricultural Show in 2004. He was elected to the Court of University of Hertfordshire in 2006. Very much a family man, Morton, Cecilia and their three daughters and a son, made Sarratt the centre of their lives. They opened the garden for many charities over the years.

Morton's life covered an extraordinary series of enormous changes in everyone's daily living and working. But Morton adapted and adjusted and cheerfully weathered it all. He will be greatly missed at many levels but in Sarratt it will be for his warm and generous personality and friendship that he will be remembered with particular fondness.