

## OBITUARY

THE DEATH occurred on 28th September, 2021 in St David's Hospital, Cardiff, UK at the age of 93 of **Donald William Proctor, OBE, BSc, FRICS**. Proctor (Fig. 1) was born in Muree in India (now Pakistan) on the 8th August, 1928 where his father was serving as an officer in the Indian Army. He lived in India with his family until 1935 and then attended boarding school in the UK where he developed an interest in map making.

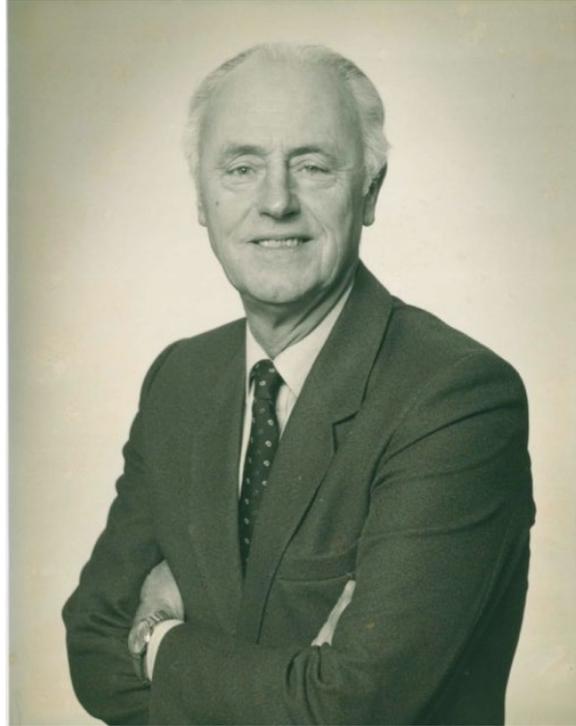


FIG. 1. Donald (Don) Proctor.

After leaving school he was commissioned into the Royal Engineers (RE). He was later posted to 42 Survey Engineer Regiment in Egypt and on to the Topographic Squadron in Jordan. He served in the British Army until 1965. After a number of overseas postings he returned to the UK and was appointed manager of Air Survey Branch at the Ordnance Survey at Chessington where military personnel still occupied most managerial grades. It came as a surprise to him that his first task was to write an in-house handbook on aerial triangulation which included detailed instructions for calculating and adjusting observations from a Hilger and Watts stereocomparator of which E. H. Thompson was closely involved in the design.

In 1965, he opted to leave the Army with the rank of major and became a lecturer in the Department of Photogrammetry and Surveying at University College London (UCL). He also became involved in projects where his mathematical and computer programming knowledge was required to calculate measurements from stereoscopic observations obtained from unusual cameras in extraordinary configurations. One example involved calculating the depth of several craters on the moon for NASA where one photograph of the stereopair was taken through a telescope at the Mount Wilson Observatory in 1919 and the other from the Ranger 7 in 1964. In 1967 Proctor gave evidence to the Aberfan Tribunal, which investigated the circumstances of a slag heap which collapsed onto a primary school in Wales. The complex calculations with measurements made on a series of single photographs taken over several decades with various non-metric cameras showed that the pit heap had been moving very slowly for a long time before its sudden collapse. During

his cross examination, he advised a somewhat aggressive QC that he might have asked more appropriate questions if he had previously consulted a professional land surveyor. He also played the major part in the field work involved in carrying out a photogrammetric wriggle survey on an experimental stretch of the second Mersey tunnel while under construction. During his time at UCL, he always enjoyed teaching basic surveying on field courses and in taking part in the field work involved with providing control for several photogrammetric projects of a research nature including Huby's Tower at Fountains Abbey, The White Tower at the Tower of London and Silbury Hill.

As a result of an open competition in 1970, Proctor joined the Joint Survey Service (Ordnance Survey (OS), Directorate of Military Survey (DMS) and Directorate of Overseas Surveys (DOS)) and was placed in charge of Research and Development at OS. During the next 18 years, he held senior positions in each of the constituent organisations, the longest of which was ten years as Assistant Director Survey at DOS. During this time he regularly travelled to visit up to 14 field parties operating in different countries including much of Africa, the Caribbean, Yemen and the East Indies. In 1984 he returned to his former post at OS as head of Research and Development until his retirement in 1988. In January 1988, he was awarded the OBE for services to the Ordnance Survey.

Proctor was a keen supporter of the former Photogrammetric Society, being a member of Council from 1967 to 1983 and President from 1979 to 1981. He was made an Honorary Member in 1983. He published several papers in *The Photogrammetric Record*, mainly on aerial triangulation, and co-operated with others on a number of reviews and reports. He was Secretary of Commission III (Aerial Triangulation) of the International Society for Photogrammetry from 1968 to 1972 and a member of the Financial Commission of The International Society for Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing from 1980 to 1988, latterly taking the chair.

Proctor had an analytical mind matched by an inquisitive nature which may not have always worked to his advantage. He would not let go until he fully understood the matter in hand. Similarly he always wanted to get the best out of a situation or a product. This is illustrated by the fact that he kept his first car, a Borgward Isabella, for 17 years.

*This obituary is an edited version of a longer version published in The Photogrammetric Record.*