

**Obituary for Professor Jonathan Frederick Tunnicliffe FREng CEng**  
**Hon FIMMM**

It is with great sadness that the Institute says good bye to Professor John Tunnicliffe who passed away on Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> December 2021. He was in his 93<sup>rd</sup> year.

He was born on 20<sup>th</sup> September 1929 in Grassmoor, Derbyshire with an immediate introduction to the mining industry, as his father was a colliery manager. His education moved from Derbyshire to Yorkshire where he entered the Queen Elizabeth Grammar School in Wakefield. There he excelled at sports, being captain of cricket, captain of athletics and vice-captain of rugby. He met his wife Barbara, who was at the Wakefield High school. They were then married for 65 years, and had four children, two boys and two girls.

He studied mining engineering at Leeds University and graduated in 1954 with a BSc (hons) degree. He completed his mining qualifications by gaining his 1<sup>st</sup> Class Certificate of Competency No 6401 in 1956.

John rose through the managerial ranks to become manager at Snydale Colliery at the age of thirty before moving to spend four happy years at Newmarket Silkstone. There followed General Manager appointments at other West Yorkshire collieries before he moved to the new Selby coalfield as the first colliery manager covering Gascoigne Wood, Wistow and Stillingfleet mines. During that time the two surface drifts at Gascoigne Wood were successfully driven and sealed against the water bearing strata. He also had the honour to take Mrs Thatcher on a visit to Wistow, where she rode in the sinking bucket to see the shaft sinking.

During this time John was heavily involved in both the local and national mining Institutes. He was Honorary Secretary of the Midland Institute of Mining Engineers (MIMinE) from 1974 to 1979, President 1978 to 1979, Honorary Treasurer 1985 to 1992 and the National President of the Institution of Mining Engineers 1987-1988. John was also a member of the North of England Institute of Mining and Mechanical Engineers (NEIMME).

John initiated the J F Tunnicliffe paper competition in 1978 to encourage junior members to become more competent in public speaking by delivering a presentation on a topic within the mining and minerals industry. This has been combined with the C S Littlewood award to form part of the Institute of Materials, Minerals and Mining (IOM3) Young

Persons' Lecture Competition. This was the earliest example of his ongoing commitment to the development of young people and their key skills.

John left the mining industry in 1981 to pursue a career in academia, becoming Professor of the Mining Department at Newcastle University 1982-1990, a move that was entirely consistent with his enthusiasm for encouraging young engineers. When the Newcastle course was closed, he transferred to Leeds University as Professor of Mining Engineering, becoming an Emeritus Professor on his retirement in 1991. Many young engineers benefitted from John's expertise and experience in assisting young people to achieve their full potential.

John was elected to be a fellow of the Royal Academy of Engineering in 1989. From 1995 to 2013 he was Chairman of the Headstart Board. This Board monitored a 5 day course for students with good results at O levels who held a possible interest in an engineering career. The course was extended to around 20 universities in England, Scotland and Wales and illustrated what students would encounter on an undergraduate course in the different disciplines. Most courses also included a day visit to a major engineering company in their locality.

In 2020, John was presented with the Institute of Materials, Minerals and Mining Outstanding Contribution Award in recognition of his prolonged and major contribution to the Institutes core activities. The presentation, albeit by Zoom, was made alongside others to distinguished individuals across the world.

John's interest in sport continued throughout his life. He was a member of Yorkshire Cricket Club from 1970 to 2021 and a season ticket holder at Leeds United Football Club for approximately 65 years.

The Trustees of the Midland Institute of Mining Engineers and the North of England Institute of Mining and Mechanical Engineers in recognition of the long and outstanding contribution Professor Jonathan Tunnicliffe had made to the Institutes with over 50 years of service, agreed to strike a medal in his honour and award it annually to an outstanding young engineer. The first competition was held in 2021 and the medal was presented by Professor Tunnicliffe personally to the winner at the Mining Technology Division conference at Neville Hall, Newcastle upon Tyne.

Board of Trustees of the Midland Institute of Mining Engineers