

Celebration of Life



10 AUGUST 1942 - 28 MARCH 2021

**IN LOVING MEMORY OF
PROFESSOR BRIAN MORTON**

Emeritus Professor of Marine Ecology, The University of Hong Kong
PhD, DSc, OBE, JP



26 June 2021 (Saturday)
2:30pm to 4:30pm
Rayson Huang Theatre
The University of Hong Kong

Order of Proceedings

Master of Ceremony: Professor Alice STWONG

Associate Dean of Science and Professor of School of Biological Sciences, The University of Hong Kong

First Session

Silence Tribute and Introduction

Professor Matthew R EVANS

Dean, Faculty of Science, The University of Hong Kong

Tributes to Professor Morton

Professor WANG Gungwu (Video)

Vice-Chancellor (1986-1995), The University of Hong Kong

Professor Richard Y C WONG

Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor, The University of Hong Kong

Professor Gray A WILLIAMS

Director of the Swire Institute of Marine Science and Professor of School of Biological Sciences, The University of Hong Kong

Dr Siu-fai LEUNG

Director, Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department, HKSAR Government

Ms Nicole WONG

Corporate Affairs Director, World Wide Fund for Nature, Hong Kong

Slideshow I: Memories of Professor Morton

Reminiscences by His Students and Friends (Session I)

Professor Rudolf S SWU

Advisor, Department of Science and Environmental Studies, The Education University of Hong Kong

Dr Patsy P S WONG

Former Senior Fisheries Officer, Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department, HKSAR Government

Professor Joe SY LEE

Professor and Director, Simon F S Li Marine Science Laboratory, School of Life Sciences, The Chinese University of Hong Kong

Professor Laurie CHAN (Video)

Canada Research Chair in Toxicology and Environmental Health, Department of Biology, The University of Ottawa, Canada

Song Tribute to Professor Morton (Session I)

Dr Emma MAK

“Elephant in the Attic”

Intermission



Second Session

Slideshow II: Professor Morton’s Teaching Life and Contribution to Marine Conservation in Hong Kong until His Retirement

Reminiscences by His Students and Friends (Session II)

Dr Lindsay PORTER

Senior Research Scientist, SEAMAR, Hong Kong

Dr Peter COLLINSON (Video)

Founder, Dendrityca Maritime Robotics, UK

Dr Tracy FRENCH (Video)

Former Research Scientist, Wildlife Conservation Society

Dr Alice L C CHAN

Environmental Protection Officer, Environmental Protection Department, HKSAR Government

Dr Khaki K CHAN

Fisheries Officer, Agriculture Fisheries and Conservation Department, HKSAR Government

Slideshow III: Professor Morton’s Post-retirement Life

Reminiscences by His Students and Friends (Session III)

Professor Kenneth M Y LEUNG

Chair Professor and Director of State Key Laboratory of Marine Pollution, City University of Hong Kong

Dr Shiru TAO

Environmental Consultant, Mott McDonald Hong Kong Ltd.

Dr Elvis XU (Video)

Assistant Professor, Department of Biology, The University of Southern Denmark

Dr Priscilla LEUNG

Research Associate, State Key Laboratory of Marine Pollution, City University of Hong Kong

Poem Reading – ‘An Ode... For Man Stands Tall’

Dr Sein-tuck CHIU

Former Special Projects Manager and Head, Ecological Advisory Programme, Kadoorie Farm and Botanic Garden

Reminiscences by His Students and Friends (Session IV)

Professor Kevin MACKEOWN

Honorary Professor, Department of Physics, The University of Hong Kong

Professor António M de Frias MARTINS (Video)

Emeritus Professor, The University of Azores, Portugal

Mr Yiu-leung LEE

Former colleague, Faculty of Science, The University of Hong Kong

Dr Paul HODGSON

Managing Director, Oceanway Corporation Ltd., Hong Kong

Note of Thanks from Professor Morton’s Family (Video)

Song Tribute to Professor Morton (Session II)

Dr Patsy P S WONG & Dr Emma MAK

“You Raise Me Up” and “God Be with You Till We Meet Again”

Last Silence Tribute and Closing Remarks

Professor Alice STWONG

Professor Rudolf S SWU



TEARFUL AT THE FALLING OF A STAR: IN MEMORY OF PROFESSOR BRIAN MORTON

(10 August 1942 – 28 March 2021)



"The value of life lies not in the length of days,
but in the use we make of them."

-Michel de Montaigne

The 28 March 2021 was, and remains, a day of great sadness for many marine biologists who mourn the passing of Professor Brian Morton, a distinguished marine biologist, an exemplary teacher and a dear friend, after a brave battle with his chronic lung disease over three years. While we deeply grieve the loss of Brian, we also celebrate his life, so full of memories and achievements.

Biography

Brian received his PhD from Chelsea College, University of London in 1969, under the supervision of Professor Richard Denison PURCHON, who himself was a student of Sir Maurice YONGE, a world authority in malacology. After his PhD, he spent half a year working at the marine laboratory of the Portsmouth University on Hayling Island. Immediately afterwards, he made the bold decision to move to Hong Kong, a place totally new and almost unknown to him, to join The University of Hong Kong as an Assistant Lecturer (later retitled as Lecturer) in the Zoology Department, and began his glamorous path for the next 33 years. As a result of his outstanding achievements, he was rapidly promoted to Reader, Professor, and subsequently Chair Professor in 1975, 1982 and 1994 respectively. In 2003, he decided to retire from The University of Hong Kong as an Emeritus Professor in Marine Ecology and return to Littlehampton, his hometown in the UK. In recognition of his significant research contributions in malacology, Brian was awarded a Doctor of Science by The University of Hong Kong in 2014, further tightening his close bond with the University.

Research

Brian's research covered a wide range of topics in marine biology, especially the biology of molluscs and marine conservation. Before his retirement, Brian had published over 300 refereed scientific research/review papers, over 40 editorials, 19 books, 16 book chapters, and served as editor of 16 workshop/conference proceedings and 18 volumes of *Asian Marine Biology* (the first and only marine biological journal in Hong Kong, launched by him). His book "*The Sea Shore Ecology of Hong Kong*" is widely acknowledged as the key reference for marine biology in Hong Kong. His passion in marine biological research and dedication to marine conservation did not diminish in any way following his retirement. He set up his own laboratory in his house in Littlehampton to further his research, and produced another 120 refereed scientific research/review papers, 40 editorials, 5 books and 6 book chapters, and continued to deliver talks at conferences and symposia. Apart from being a prolific marine environmental scientist, Brian was also a highly talented biological artist, and his pencil drawings on marine animals are highly sought after by many.

Beyond Hong Kong, Brian served as an editor or on the Editorial Boards of many key international journals, (including *Marine Pollution Bulletin*, *Malacological Review* and *Açoreana*), and won many prestigious international awards, including Knight (Ridder) in the Order of the Golden Ark (The Netherlands) in 1997, for his contributions to environmental education; Officer in the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (OBE) (UK) in 1999, for his contributions to marine ecology in Hong Kong; and the Duke of Edinburgh Conservation Gold Medal in 2004.

Marine Conservation

Brian's dedication and vision in preserving marine biodiversity in Hong Kong began very soon after his arrival in 1970. His leadership through his service in various government committees was instrumental in the subsequent establishment of marine parks, marine reserve and Mai Po Nature Reserve in Hong Kong. In 1990, he established the Swire Marine Laboratory (later renamed the Swire Institute of Marine Science, SWIMS), fulfilling his dream of providing an excellent research facility to nurture our next generation of marine biologists in Hong Kong and the region.

Between 1977 and 2002, Brian organised 9 international workshops, and invited a large



number of marine biologists with different expertise from China and overseas to work on Hong Kong’s marine life in different habitats, which laid a solid foundation of marine biological research in Hong Kong.

Teaching

Brian set an exemplary example as an excellent teacher and caring mentor. He treated his postgraduate students as his own family, stimulating their interest and nurturing their research with great enthusiasm, patience and effort. He successfully nurtured a total of 39 PhD, 23 MPhil and 14 MSc students, many of them have developed their own distinguished professional careers. Notably, some of his students (including the second and third generations in the Morton pedigree) have become internationally renowned academics in universities in Hong Kong, China, Australia, Canada, Europe and the USA; some others as leaders in environmental protection and marine conservation in government departments; others have worked within NGOs, and many others are scientific experts in private enterprises worldwide. Naturally, Brian’s students (and the subsequent generations) are extremely proud of being a member of the “Mortonian Clan”, as they were all fortunate enough to have been inspired by their mentor’s infectious passion for science and conservation.

A Final Word

It remains very difficult for us to accept that, sadly, Brian Morton’s bright candle has been burned out. However, his legacy as a towering figure of marine biology, a truly inspirational teacher and dear friend continues. We were more than fortunate to cross paths with Brian, and all those fond memories over so many years will be long remembered by his students, colleagues and friends. The foundations Brian laid in marine biology, marine conservation, and environmental education have inspired us, and will continue to grow and exert a significant impact on Hong Kong and its marine environment for many years to come.

(Excerpt from Wu *et al.* (2021) Tearful at the falling of a star: In memory of Professor Brian Morton (10 August 1942 – 28 March 2021). *Marine Pollution Bulletin*, in press)

An Ode... For Man Stands Tall by Dr Sein-tuck CHIU

Long Boat Adrift
The Sails Unfurled
Man Upon The Bow
Scanning the Waters
Whither She Blows
Where Do the Sirens Call

Whispering ‘pon Breezes
Destiny Calls
Custs a-rising
The Far East it is
Break out the Rum
Set the Sails
Man the Gunnels
Thar She Blows

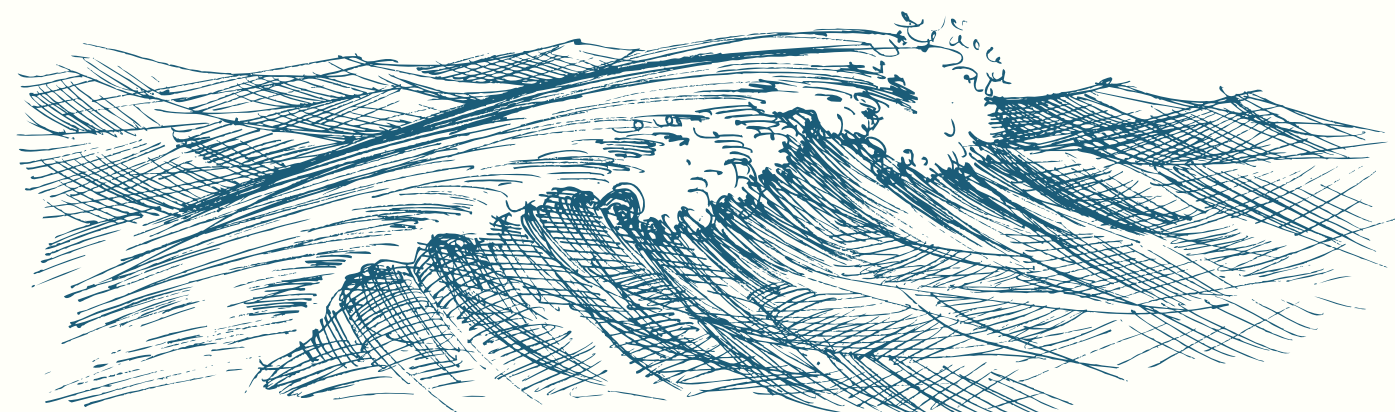
Emerald Islets
Muddied Waters
Still Be Coves
The Strandline Unblemished
Uncharted Shores
Waters Unfathomed
Life Twixt Land and Sea
The Depths Unplumbed
By Man That Knows

Twixt Then and Now
Trickling Sands of Time
Footprints Hither Thither
Upon the Dunes
No pebble unturned
No shell undrawn
Quills a-flourished
Dabbling and Musing
Man Makes Waves

Far and Wide
Rocking the Seas
Seafarer Extraordinaire
Upon the Prow
Man Stands Tall
Helming the Way
By and By
Spawning Morton’s literati (Mob)

Magh Meall maybe nigh
But To Hell With It
L’chaim Yum Seng
Hoist Them Sails
Break Out Those Barrels
Sláinte!
The Tides Be Rising
The Horizon Beckons

Swashbuckling
Intrepid The Man
Makes Waves
Make Way
The Seas, My Oyster
For Morton Stands Tall
Raise Ye Flagons
And Aye to That



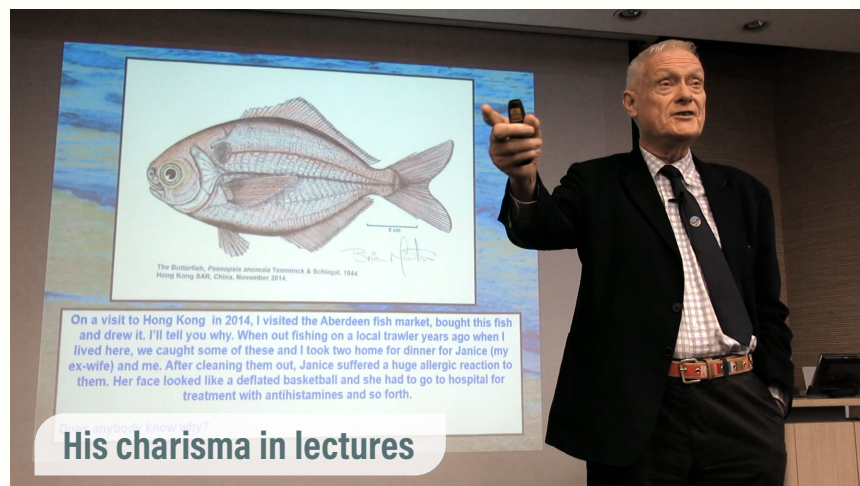
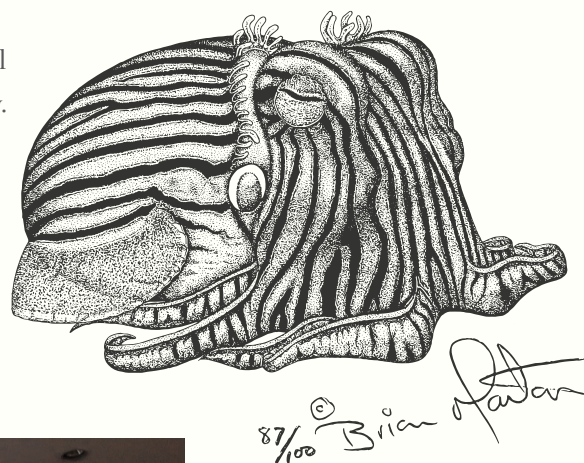


His love for drawing and publishing

Professor Morton reviewing a piece of important research writing ready for publishing.

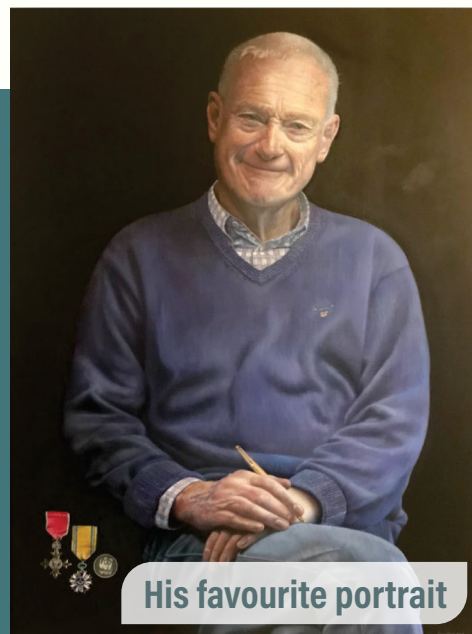
He believed drawing them, rather than taking photographs, allowed one to notice minute details and to focus on key features. He found immense self-fulfillment through creating these biological illustrations and shared them generously with friends and family.

The “Dumpling Squid”
Sepioloidea lineolata (Quoy & Gaimard)
Western Australia, July 2000



His charisma in lectures

Professor Morton giving a public lecture at The University of Hong Kong about his book on his scientific illustrations.



His favourite portrait

A painting of Professor Morton.

His pioneering and persistent efforts in propagating environmental protection efforts made him Hong Kong’s father of marine conservation.

He interacted with his students freely and jovially, treating them as family. Never once did he take credit for their work, merely mentored and took pride in watching them grow.



His student mentorship

Professor Morton with his early postgraduate research students.



His research advancement

Professor Morton receiving his Doctor of Science from The University of Hong Kong, making him an alumnus of the Faculty.

His dedication to research purely for the sake of discovery and knowledge, without an expectation of recognition, drove him to continue his work even post-retirement.



His passion for research

Professor Morton conducting research at the Swire Institute of Marine Science.



His collaborations and conferences

He was an avid research collaborator and was a key speaker at conferences and workshops.

Professor Morton surveying the marine ecosystems along Hong Kong's shoreline during his early years at The University of Hong Kong.

Despite being born during the war in 1942, he had a happy childhood. As a boy, he moved from North London to West Sussex where he saw the sea for the first time. He spent almost every day of his youth on the shores of River Arun and the beaches there. After moving to Hong Kong, he grew an interest in cataloging the marine species unique to the city.



His prime of life



His books

Professor Morton promoting his books, including his autobiography "An Autobiography - A Life Spent on the Edge of the Sea".

He has authored over a dozen books describing marine life from Hong Kong, Mexico, England and more.



Condolences

“Thank you for leading me to the wonderland of marine biology, and your inspiration did change my life. I am very proud to be your first student, and you set an excellent role model for the Morton’s clan to follow. You will stay in our hearts forever. Vale Brian!”

— *Professor Rudolf WU*

“Brian’s big heart, strong passion, great charisma, signature laughter and good sense of humour as well as all the happy days he shared with us will be long remembered. He will be in our hearts, always and forever!”

— *Dr S F LEUNG*

“Farewell Brian, our beloved ‘See Fu’. Thanks for being a lifelong teacher and friend. You taught me that anything can be achieved if you believe it’s important enough and you showed us how it’s done by your life’s work. As I navigate through myriad of challenges in my life, you never judged my decisions and you’re always there with good advice, full support and enlightening humour. You are gone yet always here.”

— *Dr Vivian LAM*

“I am so happy to be your youngest student. Brian, you are one of the most generous and kind-hearted people I had ever known. You went over and beyond, blessing us with the wealth of your knowledge and your unpretentiousness and genuine respect. By taking time to write Christmas cards for everyone of us, and in many big and little ways, you showed us your care, which we will never forget. Now that I have to accept that I will not be receiving Christmas cards from you anymore, but every Christmas card from you that I keep will remind me of the lovely memories. I miss you very much, Brian.”

— *Dr Emma MAK*



**We will
miss you dearly
Professor Morton**

Remembrance
Website
bit.ly/3w8RrGE



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THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG
香港大學理學院