

### *Sir John Johnston, d. 2005*

The quality newspapers gave appropriate attention last autumn to the death on 16 October 2005 of Sir John Johnston, a distinguished public servant in several spheres, but most notably 'one of the most skilled of that generation of diplomats who found themselves dismantling the British empire' [*The Guardian*, 15 November 2005].

John Baines Johnston was the son of the Revd. A.S. Johnston, for many years minister of the Baptist Church in Bridge Street, Banbury. He was born at Maryport, Cumberland, where his father then had a pastorate, and spent some time in Derby before the family moved to Banbury. He attended what was then the County School at Easington, that became Banbury Grammar School after the Second World War. He gained a scholarship to the Queen's College, Oxford, where he read Modern History.

He served in the army during the war, took part in the D-Day landings, and before demobilisation was a major in the Gordon Highlanders. He joined the Colonial Office in 1947, and was concerned initially with the Far East, but in the middle part of his career was chiefly concerned with Africa, and was high commissioner in Rhodesia at the time of U.D.I. After spending some years in Whitehall he was high commissioner in Canada from 1974 until 1978, and served for seven years as a governor of the BBC after his retirement.

A curious aspect of his life was the way in which he was regarded in the early 1950s at his old school, where he appeared alongside the headmaster, A.D. Rose, and the secretary, Gwen Bustin on several ceremonial occasions, most notably when the school celebrated its sixtieth anniversary in 1953. At that time he was a promising rather than a distinguished diplomat, but in the light of his subsequent career perhaps the school authorities displayed a remarkable prescience.

**B.S.T.**