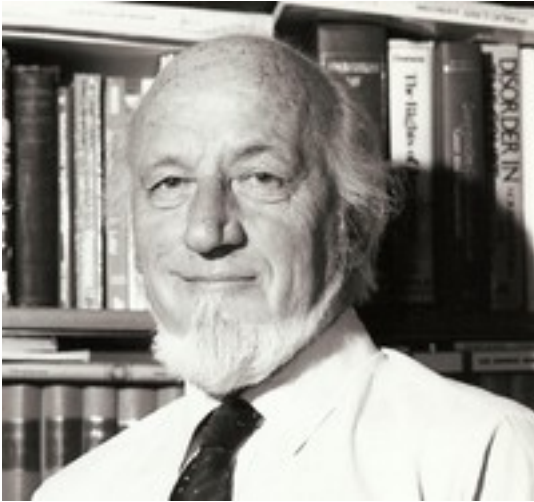


# John Griffith (1918 - 2010)



## **John Griffith (1918 - 2010)**

In John Griffith's public life he became an emeritus professor of public law who was described in a Guardian obituary as "one of the leading public law scholars of the 20th century". His 1977 book, "The Politics of the Judiciary", became a runaway bestseller, going through five editions and becoming standard reading for law students. It also caused Lord Denning in one of his public lectures in the 1980s to complain about "that man Griffith". John accepted the Denning tag as a badge of honour and was delighted when his students in Toronto during the 1980s rewarded him with a T-shirt emblazoned with the logo. He also served as an elected Chancellor of Manchester University.

John Griffith lived in Marlow on the Thames in Buckinghamshire for over fifty years and Marlow owes John an incalculable debt.

Marlow's finest building is the Grade 1 Listed suspension bridge over the Thames. This was completed by William

Tierney Clark in 1832 and it served as the model for Tierney Clark's famous Chain Bridge over the Danube linking Buda and Pest which is ten times the size of Marlow Bridge and which was completed in 1848. Not only is Marlow Bridge very beautiful but it also performs two functions essential to the character of Marlow. It has a 3 ton weight limit which stops heavy-vehicles thundering up Marlow High Street. It also restricts traffic volume flows because the narrow arches at either end allow only one car to pass at a time. Without Marlow Bridge, Marlow would not be Marlow.

From 1955 to 1961 John represented Marlow on Buckinghamshire County Council. In 1957, as a councillor, he became aware that Buckinghamshire and Berkshire's highway engineers were hatching serious plans to demolish the low-capacity Grade 1 listed bridge and to replace it with a concrete bridge of two or four carriageways.

John sprang into action. He galvanised the great and the good of Marlow and together they formed the Marlow Bridge Preservation Society. In 1961, after a hard fight, the battle to save the bridge was won and ten years later the quasi-motorway Marlow By-pass was built with its new Thames crossing. The Marlow Bridge Preservation Society became the Marlow Society.

Had John not acted as he had done in the 1950s, Marlow today would be a profoundly different place. There would be no beautiful suspension bridge and the High Street and the fragile road network would be blighted by heavy traffic. I doubt that many of us who subsequently chose to live in

Marlow would have made that choice if the bridge had been lost.

Marlow, its people and all who love Marlow owe John a great debt. The enduring presence of Marlow Bridge is his memorial.

An Appreciation by Mike Post.