

Sub Lieutenant Peter Brockman RNVR (1935 - 2023)

School, Cadets and Naval service

Peter William Sheppard Campbell Brockman was born 25 March 1935 in Devonport, in the shadow of the Royal Naval dockyards where his grandfather was based, while his father served on board HMS Nelson. Peter Brockman was throughout his life imbued with a sense of duty and loyalty to King, Country and the Royal Navy.

At Highgate School, Peter served in the army section of the cadet corps from 1950 to 1953 (there being no Royal Navy section), which was attached to the Middlesex Regiment. He attained his Cert B qualification in 1953 learning to fire 25 pounder guns.

As a guest, he was present at the 15th June 1953 Coronation Fleet Review at Spithead.

Having obtained Distinctions in his A-level exams, the school recommended he apply to study History at Christ Church, Oxford. With the agreement of the admissions tutor there, Peter elected first to do an extended 30-month period of National Service, and entered the Royal Navy in March 1954 for preliminary training at Victory Barracks, Portsmouth – there was no need for basic seaman training in view of his CCF Cert B.

After further training at Portland on board HMS Ocean, in July 1954 Peter became a National Service Midshipman RNVR, and in August 1954 was posted to HMS Gambia in the Med. When HMS Gambia left the Mediterranean 1st Cruiser Squadron in October, Peter then transferred to HMS Forth, the submarine depot ship in Malta. He missed both her earlier involvement in the Kefalonia earthquake and later involvement as a command ship during the Suez crisis, but enjoyed several cruises back to Kefalonia and exercises in the Aegean in support of the 1st Submarine flotilla, as well as routine life on board serving the submarines in harbour.

Peter's national service ended in September 1956 when he left with the rank of Sub-Lieutenant, and in October 1956 he went up to Christ Church, Oxford. He continued in the RNVR – later RNR – until going out East in 1960. Thereafter, he remained a lifelong paid-up member of the Exeter Flotilla.

He remained a stalwart supporter of the Royal Navy all his life, and in 1986 while General Manager of Hongkong Bank, Hong Kong Office, became a trustee first of the China Fleet Club, and then of the China Fleet Country Club, when he helped with the search for and establishment of the club's UK presence in Saltash, remaining a trustee of the latter for 25 years.



Civilian Life

In civilian life, after joining the Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation in London on 1st September 1959, he moved to Hong Kong in 1960 as a Trainee Bank Officer at Cloudlands. His first posting was to Hamburg, where he arrived on 2nd May 1962, the same day on which his future wife, Margot Simon, joined the bank locally. As the oldest foreign bank in Germany, the bank had a well-established operation focussing on financing Sino-German trade, with several long serving Hongkong Bank officers and close colleagues including Ian Menzies (concurrent with Peter) and others including Sir Keith Whitson and Sir Willie Purves (at different times) cutting their teeth there.

After wedding Margot in Wiveliscombe on 9th August 1963, the newly married couple took a steamer out East to recently independent Malaysia, and Peter served as chief accountant at the bank's branch in Ipoh, where son Henry was born in October 1964. Singapore followed from 1965-67, then Hong Kong in mid-1967 where second son Julian was born in October, while living in Luginsland on Old Peak Road.

Peter then did two tours of duty with his family in Singapore from 1970 to 1976, where he continued his earlier involvement in the bank's nascent EDP – Electronic Data Processing department. Happy family memories of living in Black & White bungalows in Sri Menanti on Jervois Road remain strong today.

In 1977 Peter returned to Hong Kong where son James was born in August 1978, and was promoted to head of Trade Finance, where he put his all into this new challenge and excelled, so that in 1979 a further promotion to General Manager of Germany, based in his old stamping ground of Hamburg, followed.

The final period in Peter's 32-year career at HSBC (as the Hongkong Bank became) ensued, with a move back to Hong Kong in 1982 as General Manager Hong Kong Office. A high profile/ high commitment job which came with extensive customer entertainment, some of which was carried out at Happy Valley and Shatin racecourses, which allowed Peter to indulge one of his many passions: horseracing. A number of the bank's officers formed ownership syndicates, and happy were they and my father to be present at the winner's parades.

While still in Hong Kong, in 1986 Peter moved into HSBC's new Sir Norman Foster designed headquarters as General Manager Planning. In this position, he played a pivotal role in enabling Sir Willie Purves' strategic move to acquire UK's Midland Bank, while also finding time to serve as Chairman of Visa Asia Pacific.

Although Peter was invited to stay on both at HSBC and on the board of Visa to continue his highly valued strategic input, on 2nd December 1991 he retired to Devon, to start a new life in his ancestral county, and to serve the local community in as many ways as he could. These included, but were not limited to, a decade with St. John Ambulance including as Commander for Devon; Governor and Chairman of the Trustees of the Deaf Academy; an Official Prison Visitor at Channings Wood prison; a Director and Chief Steward at the Devon County Agriculture Association for over 20 years, and for 25 years until 2016 a Trustee of the China Fleet Country Club, many of which he served as Chairman.

In London, he also served for many years as a Director of the Henry Lester Trust, the objective of which was to support talented Shanghai students to study at the highest level in the UK, an objective which allowed Peter to support longstanding Sino-British ties.

In earlier years Peter was a keen cricketer and football player, playing for the MCC, HKCC and bank teams, then in his 30s he turned to golf which became an enduring passion until he was sadly no longer able to play in 2022. Golf became a source of many friendships. He was a member at the Royal Hongkong Golf Club, Shek O Country Club, Golfclub am Hockenberg, China Fleet Country Club and East Devon Golf Club, while also a keen participant in several golfing associations, from the MCC to the Colonials and the China Golfing Society.

Peter was always proud of having traversed the Pennine Way solo, and liked to keep active by walking with family over Dartmoor and in the Lake District, as well as busying himself in his own garden at Stallard House. He allied his physical exploits with keeping his mind sharp and friendships close via poker and bridge, while enjoying opera, oratorios, cantatas and staying widely read in history and current affairs.

In later years, together with wife Margot, Peter joined the ESU Devon & Exeter branch; Exe DFAS; and was a keen supporter of Margot's choral activities, all of which provided many warm and enduring friendships.

Peter was loved, admired and valued by so many, and in the words of son Julian Brockman, he was "organised; a planner; forward thinking, considerate, generous and kind. He was also sharp, perceptive, intelligent and with a great sense of humour. But also modest, understated and not 'showy' in any way. Loyal with a strong sense of right and wrong and doing the right thing."

Peter died on 16 March 2023 and is survived by his wife Margot; sons Henry, Julian and James; and grandchildren Charlotte, William, Frederick, Matthew, Gemma, Elisabeth, Jolyon and Hedwig.

Peter's Memorial Service was held on Tuesday 4th July 2023, at St. Mary's Lymstone Parish Church.

Henry Brockman