

## **OBITUARY**

### **Major-General Patrick G. Brooking CB CMG MBE DL (1937-2014) Chairman of the BGA 2001-2004**

Patrick Brooking was perhaps the most colourful Chairman the Association has ever had. Towards the end of a brilliant military career he became the penultimate British General Officer Commanding Berlin. He was described by a frequent guest, Lord Yehudi Menuhin, as “The Choirboy”, by his friends as “The Singing General”, and became in his later days Master of The Worshipful Company of Broderers (City Livery Company No 48 whose speciality is Embroidery).

His father having been a Captain in the Royal Navy and a courtier, after Charterhouse, Patrick went into the army and was commissioned into the Vth Royal Inniskilling Dragoon Guards (“The Skins”) in 1956. After service in Germany, Northern Ireland and Cyprus, he was made in 1973 Brigade Major of the (extended) 39<sup>th</sup> Brigade, a posting from which he emerged with an MBE. In 1975 he took command of “The Skins” displaying outstanding leadership and encouraging his men to regard their service life as fun. He then had spells at The Staff College as an Instructor, at 4<sup>th</sup> Armoured Division as Chief of Staff and from 1982, as commander of 33<sup>rd</sup> Armoured Brigade, BAOR. After 2 years as Deputy Chief of Staff UK Land Forces at Wilton Park, he became GOC/Commandant Berlin, a post that demanded considerable diplomacy, which he had in trumps.

His weapon was music and during his postings in Germany he sang in five German choirs culminating in a place in the Berlin Philharmonic Choir with whom he sang in Britten's War Requiem in 1990, a few days after the fall of the Wall, the rehearsal for which was attended by thousands of East Germans, an occasion of great emotion.

With the active support of President Rau and of Prince Charles (who is now its Patron) he converted the old British Officers Club into The International Club (now affiliated to Hurlingham). Patrick was Honorary Life President.

As Commandant he had stood beside President Reagan when he called upon Gorbachov to “Tear down this wall” although he had handed over before it did come down in 1990. He was made CB in 1988.

After Berlin he became Director of Manning and Recruiting at the MOD before retiring from the service in 1991. He took a civilian job with the German firm Krone where he was able to use his fluent command of German to help its international expansion.

In retirement he became Honorary Colonel of the Vth Royal Inniskilling Dragoon Guards and, after amalgamation with the 4th/7<sup>th</sup> Dragoon Guards, of the merged Regiment, The Royal Dragoon Guards (1992-4) - very exacting roll.

Having joined the Executive Committee of the BGA in 1997, he served as Chairman from 2001 to 2004. He presided over the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations and promoted the restructuring of Youthbridge and the revival of the Younger Members Group. Having been made CMG by the British

Government in 1997 for his services to British-German Relations, in 2004 The German Government recognised the same contribution by awarding him the Officer's Cross of the Order of Merit of the German Federal Republic. In making the presentation Ambassador Matussek commented “ You too became Ein Berliner”.

He organised 4 “millennium Concerts to further better relation between the two countries involving the Choirs of Salisbury Cathedral and the Berlin Philharmonie, two in Berlin, one in Salisbury Cathedral and one in St Pauls which was a memorable and moving performance of the Verdi Requiem.. On top of all this with prodigious energy he became Master of his Livery Company, The Broderers (2003-4). He handed over the Chairmanship of the BGA “for family reasons” in 2004 , being thrilled to be succeeded by its first German Chairman. Becoming s Deputy Lieutenant of Wiltshire, he was also active on the Dean.'s Committee of Salisbury Cathedral.

**He is survived by his wife of wellnigh half a century (they married in 1964) Pamela (nee Walford), a daughter, Samantha and a son Johnnie, who is a Lieutenant Colonel in the Royal Dragoon Guards.**

**Gilbert and Sullivan would have had their time cut out trying to do justice to this prodigious purveyor of peace and very variegated and very modern major-general.**

**John Faulder**