

“REQUIEM AETERNAM DONA EIS DOMINE”

OBITUARIES 2022

John Ralston Marr (45)

Richard Widdess, Emeritus Professor of Musicology writes:-

Padma Shri Dr John Ralston Marr, lecturer in Tamil, Music and South Indian Studies at SOAS 1954–1992, died on 19th May 2022 aged 95.

By his own account, it was Indian music, heard initially on Forces radio during the war, that drew him into a lifelong relationship with the subcontinent. Volunteering for the Indian Army in 1946, he trained in Bangalore and served in Burma and Singapore, alongside fellow officers and troops from South India. Returning to England in 1948 with a collection of records of Carnatic (South Indian classical) music and a fascination for Indian languages and culture, he came to SOAS to study Sanskrit, Tamil, archaeology (under Mortimer Wheeler) and Indian music (under Arnold Bake). PhD research on Tamil poetry took him to Annamalai and Madras (Chennai), where he began formal training in Carnatic vocal music, and developed close friendships with many of the leading Carnatic musicians of the day. In 1954 he was appointed to a Lectureship in the Indology department at SOAS, initially in Tamil. In the 1960's South Indian Music was added to his brief (his performances of Carnatic vocal music were a highly appreciated feature of departmental events), and in the 1970's he was asked to take on Hindu and Buddhist art history. From this point he concentrated on South Indian art and archaeology, which he taught for the remaining years of his SOAS career, delivering courses that inspired many students. From 1988 he became the Convenor for the Indian module of the highly successful SOAS/Sotheby's Asian art postgraduate Diploma.

On his retirement from SOAS in 1992 he was invited to teach Carnatic music theory at the Bhavan Centre in London, of which he was a founder trustee. He became a central figure at the Bhavan for many years, and his commitment to the education programme was recognised by the award of Padma Shri, one of India's highest civilian awards, in 2009.

John Marr's publications include An introduction to colloquial Tamil, with P Kothandaraman and Arumugam Kandiah (1979), The Pēriya purāṇam frieze at

Tārācuram : episodes in the lives of the Tamil Śaiva saints (BSOAS 1979), The eight Tamil anthologies, with special reference to Puranānūru and Patirrupattu (1985) and (in Italian) Letterature dravidiche (1969).

John had a deep love for India, especially for its music, visual arts and the Tamil language, understanding the interconnectivity of the visual, literary, religious and performance traditions of India, and the importance of oral transmission. Students and friends will remember him for his self-effacing charm, irrepressible enthusiasm, and encyclopedic knowledge of anything to do with South Asia, not to mention botany, Meso-American archaeology and a dozen other subjects. Generous to students himself, in an interview he paid tribute to the overwhelming kindness he had experienced in India, which had taught him “how to be as well as how to do”. He wrote: “Largely through the medium of her music, I have been privileged to share India’s tremendous tradition and sense of values of which she has so much to give to the world.”

Written by Richard Widdess, Emeritus Professor of Musicology

Richard Nurick (54)

Richard, the son of Lionel and brother of the late **Simon (52)** went to St John’s in 1944 leaving Beaumont ten years later. He started in the Wine Trade in 1959 following Military Service and University with a 3 years Apprenticeship. During these 3 years he worked in cellars, in a wine shop, assessing and Buying and selling wines, culminating in a Stage in Bordeaux during the 1961 vintage.

He joined a London Wholesale company selling wines to Hotels, Clubs and Restaurants and was promoted London Sales Director taking particular interest in Champagne and the West End of London. During this period he studied the WSET courses and passed the Diploma Level and started a series of courses with Tutored Tastings for the London University Wine & Food Society and other University Wine Clubs.

He helped launch and run a new wine company, subsidiary of a large American Company as Sales Director with a seat on the Board of Long John Distillers, another subsidiary company.

Launched Hawkins & Nurick importing and distributing mainly French Wines to the

Wine Trade and London Hotels, Clubs & Restaurants. Hawkins & Nurick Ltd was a casualty of the 1980s depression and was taken over. Richard carried on importing and Broking wines until he retired from full time wholesaling and started as a Wine Lecturer and Consultant. As a Wine Lecturer he worked for Newbury and Henley Colleges teaching WSET and Wine Appreciation courses. As a consultant he worked with the largest Bulgarian wine producer employing New Zealand wine makers for the 2005 Vintage and launching the sales of Bulgarian wines in the UK. He then launched a new wholesale wine company as a consultant and continued to teach to wine students including officers at R M A Sandhurst and on board cruise liners visiting France, Spain and Portugal as well as the Mediterranean. He was a Full Judge with the International Wine Challenge.

Dr MICHAEL GOMPERTZ (41)



His Son Philip writes:

This requiem service is exactly how Dad requested it.

In true form, he always wanted to make our lives easier, so left precise details of hymns, readings, psalms, dates, and even memorable moments to include in his eulogy. The only thing he forgot to mention was where he left all these instructions! After several stressful days hunting high and low, sleepless nights and the dread of having to start from scratch, with divine intervention our prayers were answered and we finally found them. Thank you, Dad!

We want this to be a celebration of Dad's life, looking back with smiles and positive memories over an amazing 98 years. Dad lived life to the full with humour, humility, integrity, honesty and with God firmly at the heart of his daily thoughts and actions.

Richard Michael Henry Gompertz was born in Kasauli in India in 1923, the second son to Brigadier Tom and Elsie who were stationed in Simla, while serving in the Indian Army.

At the age of 7 Dad was sent back to England, to boarding school at Beaumont College, Old Windsor, run by Jesuits. There he joined his dear brother Philip and cousin Tony.

Dad loved his school days, excelling at sport and studies, responding well to the strict discipline of the time, enjoying fun pranks and accepting with grace the inevitable punishments.

On numerous trips back to Beaumont for Remembrance Sunday services, Dad enjoyed giving us, and all the grandchildren, the obligatory tour...the dining room where they were told to sleep on the floor during air raids, the dormitories and the corridor which led to the headmaster's study, where he was regularly caned for one misdemeanor or another. But in truth, Dad cherished his school days and was grateful for all the opportunities he was given, from the Jesuit spiritual inspiration to being

chosen as a member of the OTC to line Windsor's streets for the funeral of King George V in 1936.

WW2 interrupted Dad's plans to pursue a career in medicine. He was keen to follow in his brother and cousin's footsteps and volunteered to join the army on his 18th birthday, initially posted to the Royal Armoured Corps training Regt at Bovington Camp.

Dad's world sadly changed on 1st January 1942 with news that his brother Philip had been killed by a landmine while serving with the 8th Army at Tobruk. 40 years later we were all lucky to visit Philip's war memorial in Egypt, which conjured some poignant memories for Dad of his brother who meant so much to him.

As we know only too well, things move fast during war time and, within a week after completing officer training at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, Dad was posted overseas to North Africa where he joined the 145th Regiment Royal Armoured Corps (8th The Duke of Wellington's Regt). Active service took him from Algeria to Tunisia and finally on to Italy where he was involved in heavy fighting on the Gothic Line.

Dad always believed he had 9 lives, attributed to the Good Lord. He had already survived an incident on Salisbury Plain during training when a fire power demonstration went drastically wrong. A Hawker Hurricane fighter plane accidentally mistook its target and fired into a spectator stand, where Dad was sat, killing and injuring over 100 men - Dad escaped with a bullet hole through his beret.

In Italy, while advancing in his Churchill tank, he came face to face with a feared German Tiger tank, which proceeded to fire three shots directly at him – each narrowly missed. Although his unit suffered heavy casualties, the objective was secured and Dad received a 'mention in dispatches' for his part, although the horrific memories lived with him for life.

While in Italy, Dad's interview with Pope Pius XII, in the Vatican Chambers, ranked high in his memories. His private conversation with His Holiness gave him reassurance and strength during the remaining war years.

After the war ended, Dad gained an interview for St Bartholomew's Hospital Medical College in London and finally returned home after 3 years overseas

As part of his return trip he was asked to escort a high-ranking German General prisoner of war back to England. Unfortunately, his guard failed to arrive when he landed back in this country and being a weekend, he was asked if he could take the General home with him until Monday morning – He politely pointed out that his mother wouldn't appreciate the additional guest and so alternative arrangements were made.

Between 1946 – 1953, Dad trained and qualified at 'Barts', where he met and maintained some lifelong friendships. Time and time again he recounted humorous stories of antics, such as when he and Brian Hick transported a 12ft ridge tent on the underground. After maneuvering it through the train doors, with the help of the conductor, Brian and Dad instructed all the 'Ladies and gentlemen' to kindly raise their legs on the count of 3 so they could slip the tent under their seats, causing much hilarity and amusement from the daily commuters.

The same resourcefulness was seen on family camping trips, notably when towing a new trailer tent on the motorway, a quick glance in the wing mirror saw we were being overtaken by our trailers back wheel! Undeterred, Dad calmly drove on, towing a lopsided vehicle until we could catch the tear away wheel!

After qualifying, Dad worked as a resident doctor in a number of hospitals and even took the position as a ships doctor in a 'coal burner' to the Caribbean (an eventful cruise where the ship's boiler blew up and with no power, the boat drifted for 3 days in the Atlantic).

Eventually Dad settled into general practice at St George's Rd Cheltenham in partnership with Dr Dick Bruce and specialized in Pediatrics at Cheltenham General Hospital, Battledown Children's Hospital and the Special Baby Care Unit at St Paul's Maternity Hospital. We have such fond memories of being allowed to accompany Dad on his Christmas morning rounds to the Children's Hospital and seeing him being transformed into a unique Father Christmas with a stethoscope around his neck.

In 1957, in Dad's own words, he was happy to meet a 'beautiful blonde'...our mum 'Jean' at an evening drinks party. They married five years later and we 3 appeared on the scene.

Mum and Dad were an amazing partnership. As his unofficial "secretary" Mum manned the incoming patient hotline night and day. On many occasions in the early hours, Dad ventured out with clothes thrown over his PJs to deal with local call outs. His long surgeries, going the extra mile and his care for others never wavered throughout his career. Over the years and even right up until his final few weeks, Dad continually bumped into ex patients, generations of families recounting fond, grateful or respectful memories of how Dad brought them into the world, or how he was their childhood doctor, or how he sorted ailments, or said the right things at the right time or who was just there for their loved ones in the final hours. It was incredibly humbling to hear how Dad had helped so many people ...even if made shopping trips into town with Dad, twice as long!

His doctoring skills and calm response to life's trials also extended into the home where he calmly patched up our numerous childhood tumbles ... and thought nothing of stitching up his own arm in the kitchen, after a gardening mishap, assisted by our ever-faithful Mum - with her eyes firmly closed!

Our family life was filled with a strong faith, love, laughter, and lots of wonderful experiences. Dad was always supportive and encouraging of our sporting activities, travelling exploits and career choices, we enjoyed a carefree, happy childhood that included driving across the Canadian

Prairies in a yellow school bus and countless camping trips in France and Spain.

In later years Dad loved nothing more than to keep up to date with news about his five, much loved, grandchildren - Sam, Tom, Ellie, Dan, and Theo – and their exploits, like ours, were always received with a humorous comment and much laughter.

The Catholic Church was very much a part of our family life. As an active member of St Gregory's, he was a Eucharistic Minister, delivering the Blessed Sacrament to parishioners in Hospital – He also took his weekly collection counting sessions very seriously – not quite perfecting the art of social chit-chat and balancing the figures – often having to politely request 'complete silence' to get the job done – it had to be spot on!

Sadly, the onset of the pandemic prevented Dad's daily walk to mass, so at the age of 96 and after being a complete technophobe, he courageously embraced the iPad to ensure he received a daily online mass.

How do you sum up Dad? He always jokingly described himself as a 'decent chap'. But in truth this was an understatement. He was one of a kind, from a great generation, a 'perfect gentleman', he aged well, only the odd bit of grey hair, always taking time to dress smartly, he was interested in everyone and everything and consistently took time to help others. He loved all sport, playing squash until the grand age of 75 and an avid supporter of Rugby and Cricket despite having to take beta blockers before any big International. His humour was infectious, telling great tales and always roaring with laughter often before getting to the punch line. He enjoyed life, singing along to the classics, and chuckling to the infamous My Fair Lady song 'why can't a woman be more like a man, men are so decent'!

We are incredibly grateful to so many of Dad's friends, colleagues, patients and parishioners for the heartfelt cards, messages, and calls; the personal memories have been wonderful and have meant so much to us as a family.

We have been blessed with truly wonderful parents and Dad was the best of the best. He guided and steered us without pressure, he led by example and gave us the greatest thing we could ask for love and our faith. Thank you, Dad, for it all.

And finally – As per Dad's instructions - he wanted the last word... so here it is...

I am so grateful to all my family for everything they have given me and to God for 'The Faith' and His Guidance throughout my life' remember 'Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and all will be given to you'

The Editor:

Michael Gompertz had left school hoping to be a doctor. As it turned out he found himself commissioned into The Duke of Wellington's Regiment in an armoured role and posted to the Western Desert. He wrote about one particular episode:-

"I had not wished to publicise my activities: we all had our personal moments in WW2 and many had far worse times than myself".

Michael finished the War in Italy and in his own words "was given the duty of escorting SS Oberfuhrer Otto Baum to England for investigation into war crimes. I was fortunate to get the assignment (for which I had applied) as I needed to get an interview with the Dean of Barts before being accepted there having had my studies so rudely interrupted. I had my first leave after VE Day after more than 3 years in North Africa and Italy. He took the General via Rome to Naples (while in Rome he was lucky to meet and have a short chat with Pope Pius XII). From Naples they flew in a Dakota to Blackbush aerodrome. The General was a very pleasant, dignified smart soldier who commented on our delightful summer drive and also said that he had always wanted to come to England".

Otto Baum:- was never a trained soldier having entered the ranks of the SS at 23 and commissioned in 1936. At the outbreak of War he served in Poland with Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler gaining an Iron Cross and a

second on transferring to the Western Front to a command in the Totenkopf Division. He was back in the East for Operation Barbarossa when he was awarded his Knight's Cross and following heavy fighting in the Ukraine in 1943 he was badly wounded and received the Oakleaves. Following the Normandy landings, he commanded the Das Reich Division after they had committed the atrocity at Oradour and was instrumental in



rescuing German forces from the Falaise Pocket for which he was awarded the Swords. He then moved to Italy on promotion to Oberfuhrer seeing action there and in Hungary before surrendering to the British in Southern Austria.

Baum was considered one of the best SS military commanders noted for his dash and personal distinctive bravery. He was not guilty of war crimes and remained a POW until 1948 when he returned home: he died in 1998. Michael Gompertz was MID during the War and fought in the Desert Campaign and through Italy. His elder brother **Philip (37)** was KIA at Tobruk in 1942. On Leaving the Army he qualified at Barts taking his finals in 1951 and went into partnership in Cheltenham with **Dick Bruce (37)** who had also been in N Africa (wounded) and Italy with the RAMC.

Michael loved both St John's and Beaumont which he considered his second Home as his parents were in India with the Indian Army. He played in both the XV and the Cricket XI

PATRICK JAMES HARAN (60)

Patrick was the son of a doctor and during his schooldays the family lived in Worthing. He came to Beaumont in April 1956 and soon gained the nickname of "Hasty". Pat played 3rd XV Rugby, 1st Xi Hockey and for two years was in the Cricket XI. Gaining his blazer. He was an Off-spinner and there were few wickets to suit him but with a command of flight and intelligent use of pace he served the team well. They won at Lords in '59 and he alone batted with any distinction in '60 when we suffered a disappointing defeat. On leaving school he studied to become a solicitor and eventually settled into Country practice in Crewkerne Somerset with Poole & Co. With his wife Rusty they lived for many years at The Manor at Haselbury Plunknett. In recent years Pat suffered from Dementia and for most of his illness he was able to live at home where he quietly died in his sleep on 22 February. We last saw him at a Lord's Reunion in 2019 organised by his great friend John Fieldus (OS). Rusty described Pat as a "Relaxed" Catholic and he was buried in the parish churchyard overlooking the meadows he loved so much. He is in good company "Blessed Wulfric" never recognised by the Church is also buried there.

RICHARD BELLOC LOWNDES (53)

The Editor writes:

Richard was the grandson of Marie Belloc Lowndes the author whose literary works were made into films and even an opera. Marie was the sister of Hilaire, writer, orator, poet, sailor, satirist, soldier, and political

activist whose Catholic had a strong effect on his works. Richard's aunt married Henry 3rd Earl of Iddesleigh. Richard came to Beaumont in 1949 leaving in 1953. His career was as an Underwriter and Director of various companies. For many years he and his wife Charlotte lived at Binley near Andover before moving up to Herefordshire. I met him while staying in a house party in France to discover we had many mutual friends. Richard and Charlotte divorced in 1973 but had five children – three boys who went to Downside and two daughters. Sadly, their eldest boy Charles died tragically in the USA in 2016. Their daughter Camilla is married to one of my onetime subalterns in The Royal Hussars. Richard died on the 29th April.

PATRICK (PADDY) RICHARD COFFEY

(15. 04.37 – 10.12.21)



His daughter Louise Thornbury Writes:-

Paddy was brought up in Singapore, where his Father was a doctor. In 1942, the Japanese invasion meant that he and his mother were ordered to leave on the 30 January. They got as far as Palembang in Sumatra from where they eventually got a plane to Batavia (Djarkarta).

The Consul's wife told them of a ship bound for Durban. It was due to sail the next day which was Friday 13 February, a lucky day. Sailing from Tanjong Priok that night they passed through the Sunda Straits. Shortly after the Japanese navy sealed this escape route to all shipping. South Africa had a Jesuit school, St Aidans, where Paddy went. This school has also closed, a habit (excuse the pun) of the Jays.

Paddy's father survived the POW camp just, thanks to the dropping of the atom bombs. He was involved in the building of a little known railway in Sumatra. This was between Pekanbaroe and Morea, equally as nasty as the infamous Burma death railway. It was finished on VJ day and has now vanished back into the jungle.

Paddy arrived at St Johns in 1946 and Beaumont in 1949. He was awarded his cricket colours and played at Lords in the famous 1954 game where David Bulfield took all ten wickets. A rare achievement at the home of cricket. He also swam at the little remembered triangular event at Harrow and played in the 2nd XV.

National service was in the navy, whose intake was only 5000 a year. After all the bullshit in the CCF at Beaumont, he said there was no way he wanted two years as a brown job. He saw active service in Cyprus and Suez. The latter serving in HMS Eagle as a humble aircraft armourer attached to 893 sqn FAA Flying Sea Venoms.

Returning to civvy life, with the Norwich Union, soon gave him itchy feet. He got a transfer back to Cape Town, with the firm, and then on to Salisbury – now Harare.

The 1961 centenary dinner was chaired by Louie Clifford, by now his local parish priest. Attending were a number of familiar faces Frs Rea, Devlin and Rederer. No wonder they closed Beaumont when all this talent was exported to keep up the Rhodesian province!!!!

Harold Macmillan's wind of change speech, now started to be felt. Especially in the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland. This Whitehall arranged marriage of three colonies, only came into being in 1954. A short lifespan, but with ominous under currents for financial institutions such as insurance companies.

Long term there was no future so Paddy luckily got a directorship at Coyle Hamilton in Dublin. They were the largest insurance brokers in Ireland.

Latterly he formed his own company, before retiring to the Sun.

Having lived in the tropics for a large part of his life, the northern winters did not appeal. So, he and his wife settled in Tenerife.

Paddy died at his home from cancer 10th December. The Editor heard from him during the Summer concerning the School Cricket coach D C F. Burton. He always called me Pepper, as I reminded him of an Australian bowler circa 1919-20, whom he had faced. However, Burton had

been blinded in one eye, following a squash accident. On a loud appeal, he would turn his "Nelsonian eye" and utter a resounding NOT OUT-
Paddy is survived by his widow, son, daughter and three grandchildren.