

Obituary:

Terence Sythes (OE1950-57)



Terry was a local Wandsworth boy who was born immediately before the outbreak of war in 1939. He and his sister June lost their father who was killed in action in 1942, but a hallmark of Terry's life, following the example of his mother Violet, was that hardships and problems were there to be overcome.

Seven industrious and enjoyable years at Emanuel, where many friendships were forged that were to last for the rest of his life, were followed by a scholarship to Wadham College, Oxford where he read French and German. His passion for languages had been given an early impetus from profitable school exchanges with France and Germany and, following graduation, was cemented still further by a position as a language assistant in France.

This love of language spilled over into many directions related to other cultures and formed the basis for a perception of himself as being, primarily, a European rather than just British. That view gradually expanded beyond Europe and led him to a lectureship in French at the University of Kampala in Uganda. While there he maintained a close relationship with the Alliance Française and the French Embassy, an association that secured access to his favourite

Gitanes and Gauloise cigarettes. During his five years in Uganda, he also found time to translate for the United Nations and on one occasion, even more memorably, to play the double bass at the Kampala Jazz Club, deputising for the regular bass player who hadn't turned up. The fact that he didn't really know how to play the instrument was, of course, no impediment. Terry rated the jazz club highly, saying that it provided 'the best jazz south of Ronnie Scott's'.

Back in England with his then wife, Samantha, and two boys, Justin and Peter, he began a teaching career of some 30 years with the nearby Stantonbury Campus (now known as the Stantonbury International School) in Milton Keynes until his 'retirement' in 2004. In 1981, Christine, a German foreign language assistant, arrived at the Campus and was taken under Terry's wing, as was his custom with many who were new to the school. This pastoral care also involved another of his many fortes – the culinary arts – with special emphasis on legendary curries. Terry and Christine married and then Sophie and Laura came along, providing him with an excuse to indulge another interest – good literature – with books such as his favourite *Brideshead Revisited* being read to the girls at bedtime.

Real retirement was not part of Terry's hugely extensive vocabulary. He was an active associate lecturer of French at the OU at the time of his death. Then there were frequent 50 km cycle rides to be completed, teaching a German evening class, tending to his allotment and taking trips down to London to watch Chelsea play at Stamford Bridge with Mick Flynn, another OE, very good friend and fellow Chelsea supporter (but nobody's perfect)! It was also a time dedicated to his family, of which Justin and Peter were also an integral part, with many highdays and holidays celebrated by them all together.

Copies of his regular 'reports from the allotment' would be uploaded to many of his friends' PCs. These were immensely witty and incisive and included challenging recipes based on the fruits of his horticultural labours and sometimes accompanied by short snatches of jazz or songs by the likes of Georges Brassens. They were always richly entertaining and will be greatly missed – like Terry himself.

Terry died on 11th February 2021.

By David Parton (OE1951-57)



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