

Colonel Bill Chesshyre

Master Glass Seller

Bill was born during the Second World War in a hospital in Basingstoke that subsequently became a lunatic asylum. His parents (father away on military service) and grandparents were living in a house on the River Test rented from the Hoare banking family, which has subsequently become one of Her Majesty's stud farms.

He was second in a family of six. Their father being a career Army officer, there was much following the flag – Austria (twice), Singapore and various places in the United Kingdom. Denied a posting to Cyprus by Duncan Sandys' axing of the Army, he took early retirement and settled with his large family in a village outside Canterbury.

Bill was educated at an eccentric High Anglican boarding preparatory school near Sevenoaks (from the age of 7!) and the King's School, Canterbury. Alone amongst his siblings, he elected to follow his father into the Army, after being "bribed" with the award of an Army Scholarship to fund his last two years at school, much to the relief of his financially burdened father. Hence two years at The Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst, leading to a commission in the Royal Engineers. There followed three heady years as an undergraduate at Trinity College, Cambridge, reading Mechanical Sciences and some Russian, with all fees paid and enjoying a Lieutenant's salary.

Tempted by the mysteries of the East, he volunteered for service in the Gurkha Engineers and was approved by the Colonel of the Regiment, the magnificently-monocled General Lancelot Perowne. His first posting was in Malaysia, where he built bridges and roads, exercised in the jungle, and trained Gurkha recruits. Keen to pursue his early fascination with Russia and life behind the Iron Curtain, he persuaded the system to let him train as a Russian Interpreter, spending 18 months at a special school in Beaconsfield and lodging with Russian émigrés in Paris. There followed 2 years at GCHQ as a reward for his efforts. Next, back to the Gurkha Engineers, then in Hong Kong, trekked in Nepal, married, served in Northern Ireland, attended the Staff College, posted to the Ministry of Defence, back to the Gurkha Engineers in Hong Kong, where he was tasked with forming a new engineer squadron and moving it to Chatham. Thereafter 6 months at the National Defence College and 6 months in the Falkland Islands, followed by 2 years commanding the Depot Regiment Royal Engineers in Chatham.

Then he was offered the post of Defence Attaché in Bucharest, which entailed a year's preparatory training and learning Romanian. A fascinating 3 years followed, experiencing at first hand the excesses of Nicolai Ceausescu's special brand of Socialism, being harassed by Securitate as he drove through the countryside, eavesdropped everywhere, threatened with expulsion for straying into sensitive areas, and finally witnessing the violent revolution that led to the demise of the odious Ceausescu's - and nearly his own. A few months helping develop relations with the new regime, including meeting a request from one senior member for copies of "Yes, Minister" for guidance on governing, and accompanying the new Defence Minister, later imprisoned for corruption, on a visit to London, then fond farewells and a move to Prague to take up the post of Defence Attaché there, where he spent 4 years helping to build good relations

with the Czechoslovak, Czech and Slovak military and intelligence services, receiving a string of military visitors, including the Chief of the Defence Staff, the Chairman of the NATO Military Committee (twice) and numerous other senior officers and officials, escorting Defence Ministers and military chiefs on visits to London and helping host several senior civilian visitors, including Prime Minister John Major, Minister for the Armed Forces, HRH Prince Charles (with Diana), HRH Princess Margaret and the Archbishop of Canterbury. Then, in 1994, a grand farewell party in the Kounicky Palace and a long drive home into retirement in a house bought earlier on the Isle of Dogs.

A second career called, and job search led to appointment as Clerk to the Painter-Stainers' Company. There was a parting of the ways after 8 years, then the Gunmakers took him on for another 8 years before retiring him at the age of 70. He was recruited into the Ward of Cheap Club by the late Alderman Anthony Bull and was elected President in 2017 - at the same time as Donald Trump became President of the USA! In 2004 he was invited to join the Livery of the Glass Sellers' Company by Past Clerk/Past Master Brian Rawles. and somehow ascended the greasy pole to the Prime Warden

He married in 1975 the lovely Bimala, ethnically Nepali and brought up in Darjeeling, niece of the leading Nepalese artist and writer, the late [Lain Singh Bangdel KCVO](#), whom he met when she was serving in Hong Kong as a Captain with Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps. They regularly visit Nepal to spend time with her surviving family. They travel extensively, support their local church on the Isle of Dogs, and enjoy good company, food and wine. Bill used to shoot game in his younger, fitter, days and sings in choirs when the opportunity arises.