

# Vale

## NOTICAS

### MARK WROTTESELEY

Corporal the Honorable Mark Wrottesley was born on 21 June 1951 at Westminster in England. His father was Major Richard Wrottesley MC (1918 - 1977) who, upon the death of his uncle, Victor Wrottesley, in 1962, became the 5th Baron Wrottesley. Until it was sold in 1963, the Wrottesley family had owned the Manor of Wrottesley Hall in Staffordshire since the 13th century. The family numbers several High Sheriffs of Staffordshire among its members, including Richard Wrottesley (died 1521) who married a descendent of King Edward III. Major Wrottesley won his Military Cross during Operation Market Garden when he led his Household Cavalry troop of armoured cars through the German lines and established contact with the Polish Parachute Brigade on the south bank of the River Rhine at Arnhem. After the war, Dick Wrottesley met the officer commanding the German tanks to whom he had given the slip. The German informed Dick's wife, Mary, that: "I went to Berlin to get a blast from Hitler, and Dick went to get a medal from the King."

Mark's mother was Major Wrottesley's second wife. Joyce Marion Wallace was born in 1923 in Shanghai, the daughter of the Director-General of Burmah Oil, Dare Frederick Wallace. In Shanghai, in 1940, she married an Irish soldier, Sean Rainey, who was serving in the Seaforth Highlanders. There were two children from the marriage. Back in England in 1949 and single again, she married Dick Wrottesley, who, according to her 2006 obituary in the Daily Telegraph, is reputed to have "locked her in the lavatory until she had agreed to marry him"<sup>[2]</sup>. However, the marriage soon broke down with Dick telling her that he had "only married her for her tarty qualities". Later she gained a reputation on the society party circuit for flirting with every man the room and mixing with such luminaries as the Kray twins and Somerset Maugham. The marriage ended in divorce in 1953 with Mark being the only child of the marriage.

Dick Wrottesley's mother and elder brother had been born in the Eastern Cape; after the war, his mother and step-father settled there. Dick followed them out to the Cape in 1952 after he had left the army. In 1955 Dick married for the third time, to Mary Ada van Echten Tudhope, by whom he had a further two sons. (Dick Wrottesley also had a surviving son in 1942 by his first wife, Roshnara Wingfield-Stafford.) In 1952, the one-year-old Mark was left behind in England and these early years are reported to have been a traumatic time for him. However, on the 20 September 1956, now five, Mark sailed from Southampton for Cape Town aboard the Athlone Castle to join his father and his step-mother.

Growing up in South Africa, Mark was one of four half-brothers. The other three were schooled at Eton and Harrow and all went on to university, including the eldest, Richard, to Cambridge. However, Mark was sent to St Andrew's College, Grahamstown, where he is on the register from 1965 to 1970. School records also show that he was good at fencing and drama. Indeed his step-mother, Lady Wrottesley, states: "He could be very convincing about things because he could act well."

Lee Hall also attended St Andrew's and recalls that: "He and I played for the same undistinguished hockey team in a house which was rampantly rugby-oriented, and I remember him as a game and by no means ineffective goalie - probably the most over-worked member of the team. He was always the guy yelling encouragement at the rest of us. I don't recall whether he was actually captain, but if not he should have been." Lee goes on to say: "He had no airs and graces and clowned around quite a bit, but under the clowning there was something solid and rather decent about him." Not considered 'university material', on leaving St Andrew's, Mark headed north to Rhodesia, where in 1962 Lt-Gen John Hickman recalls that Mark's father had served as TF Liaison Officer at HQ 2 Brigade. Mark attended the School of Infantry in Gwelo as an officer cadet, but withdrew before completion of the course as he wanted to be a troopie in the Rhodesian Light Infantry. In September 1971, 2 Commando was on exercise at Cleveland Range and after a strenuous run-down, Mark turned to the CSM and said in his upper class voice: "My dear sergeant-major, in future I think I shall abstain from run-downs." The CSM's response wasn't recorded but it can well be imagined.

Charlie Aust, the OC of 2 Commando, remembers "Wrotters as very intelligent and a wonderful guy". His good nature made an impression on the RLI ouens, cheerfully accepting the ribbing that his accent and aristocratic background brought his way. He was immensely tall, being well over six foot; John van Stan said this made him very useful on OP duties as he could see a lot further than the other ouens at ground level. With his immense height came a pair of extremely large feet which also feature in the memories of the RLI ouens. Sandy Miller, the CSM of 2 Commando tells of one op where a pair of size 13 boots had to be dropped to Mark in a container all of their own. RSM Harry Springer remembers how on one parade he came to inspect Mark's boots and he could not get over how huge they were and he didn't "think they were particularly shiny either"☹. By 1974, Mark had been promoted to lance-corporal and was undertaking new duties as 2 Commando's clerk.

In 1975 Mark transferred out of the RLI and became one of the first six members of the Grey's Scouts. Neville Croxford of the Grey's Scouts Association knew him well and states he was a very good horseman. Again, his jovial good nature left an impression on those around him. By now a corporal, Mark left the Grey's Scouts and the army in 1979. Mark married Marie-Louise du Plooy in 1975 by whom he had two daughters, Caroline and Veronica. Unfortunately the marriage did not last and they divorced in 1978. He was married for a second time in 1981 to Judy Matthews. Mark is reported to have been managing the golf course at Ermelo, Eastern Transvaal when on 11 October 1986 he died at the age of thirty-five.