

Captain Peter Kimm (Royal Navy Gunnery Specialist & Naval Intelligence)

From The Daily Telegraph 11 November.

Captain Kimm born 12 January. 1928 - Died 23 October, 2016

Captain Peter Kimm, who has died aged 88, was a naval gunnery officer who became a lay Franciscan and a campaigner whose moral and spiritual compass impressed all.

Kimm was a wartime cadet at Dartmouth when the college was evacuated for one term to Bristol and then to Eaton Hall, Chester. He was at sea, though still under training, before the end of the war in the cruiser *Frobisher*, and recalled spending VE Day in Rosyth, and in 1945-6 in the cruisers *Nigeria* and *Norfolk* he helped to police the revolt in the East Indies against the former Dutch colonial masters.

His wider talents were rewarded by selection in 1948 to be sub-lieutenant of the gunroom (responsible for the discipline of other young officers) in the cruiser *Superb* on the home station. In the period 1949-51 he commanded several motor torpedo boats and in 1952 he specialised in gunnery, before leading the Chatham field gun crew to win at the Royal Tournament.

He held several key gunnery appointments at sea in 1954-61, in ships from frigates to aircraft carriers, and served worldwide from the Far East to the Arctic before promotion made him the youngest commander in the Navy.

Kimm commanded the frigate *Loch Fyne* in the Middle East 1961-3 and the destroyer *Agincourt* 1966-7. While in *Loch Fyne* he was in effect Britain's ambassador at large in the Gulf region, and the friends he made included the Sultan of Muscat, who presented him with a silver coffee pot and with whom he afterwards maintained a regular correspondence.

In 1967-72 Kimm spent five years as head of Soviet analysis, working for the Director, Naval Intelligence (DNI), work so secret that he never discussed it, but which, he recalled, was "absolutely suited to my *métier*"; for this he was appointed OBE.

The only son of an army officer, Peter Richard David Kimm was born on January 12th 1928 in Belfast and enjoyed a peripatetic education at various schools including Athelstan, Folkestone, and Gun Club Hill Army school in Kowloon.

Returning to Britain by ship in 1937 young Kimm continued his education at the imperial Service College junior school, Windsor, and then King's College choir school, Cambridge, before passing the examination and interview to the Royal Naval College, Dartmouth, which he entered in September 1941.

After DNI he was Deputy Captain Naval Drafting, staff officer responsible for naval control of shipping, and, in 1979 was an acting-captain in charge of the Royal Naval Auxiliary Service.

In 1982 he helped to found the British Maritime League, becoming its first director with the task of promoting maritime interests, and reminding the British people, industry and parliament what the sea meant to the country. Lord Callaghan was persuaded to lead a maritime parliamentary group and over 100 prominent patrons were recruited.

Kimm was a prolific writer of letters to the broadsheets and to individuals, regardless of their rank, on the subject of Britain's sovereignty, defence, the government of the day's neglect of the Navy, and the environment. Some of his letters were humorous but most were extremely serious. Many a senior officer, politician and senior theologian recognised the tight logic of his arguments. The contents of his letters to M.Ps about the illegality of the Iraq War found their way into parliamentary debates.

Throughout his life Kimm was dedicated to the dignity of the individual. In the Navy this was manifested by sending the crew ashore with hand-drawn, cartoon-assisted phrase books to help overcome potential language difficulties, and by his writing newsletters to his ship's company families.

On retirement he became a prison visitor at H.M. Prison Kingston in Portsmouth, which led to correspondence with inmates on death row in Alabama State Penitentiary, particularly Brian Baldwin, an African-American who spent 22 years on death row while protesting that the only evidence against him, his confession, had been beaten out of him. Kimm joined petitions by senior American judges, the Pope, President Jimmy Carter, the Archbishop of Mobile, the US Congressional Black Caucus and Coretta Scott King - nevertheless

Baldwin was executed in 1999. This work, Kimm said, "taught him about life, and himself".

His other interests included heraldry, wild flowers and flower-arranging, and a love of opera. Verdi was his favourite, and he and his daughters made car journeys and washing up after dinner sound like an evening with the van Trapps.

In 1951 Kimm converted to Roman Catholicism, when he was about to marry Colette, the daughter of Comte Alfred Parent de Curzon, the French consul general in London, brother of François de Curzon who had fought in the French resistance in 1940, and scion of two ancient French families.

Then Catholic faith became central to his life, and in 1975 he joined the Third Order of St. Francis of Assisi. As Brother Peter Kimm, he broadcast the Prayer for the Day several times on Radio 4, just before the *Today* programme.

However, when a long term prisoner, one of those who Kimm visited, expressed an interest in also becoming a lay member of the Order and was refused on the grounds he would not be able to attend regular meetings, Kimm denounced the ruling as "utterly mad" and resigned - while continuing to follow the Franciscan rule.

He was a charming companion whose interest and concern for others was clear and, although accomplished and erudite, he had a natural and unaffected modesty. His deep love for his artistic wife and family was rewarded by four creative daughters: Fiona, an opera singer; Buffy, a theatrical designer; and two authors, Gabrielle and Vicky.

His wife has recently had her first short story, written at the age of 22, accepted for publication.