

# David Ramsey

A British Naval Officer in a submarine bound for Canada in 1964, David Ramsey recalled with awe the violence of the Atlantic. "The seas were immense and spaced at intervals of quarter to a half mile, the mountains of water rose to a height of 30 to 40 feet.

We would climb up one of them and the bow would come out at the top before toppling back down into the trough. It was terrifying and left me with a deep respect for the sea."

Another scary event in his long and distinguished naval career was taking the submarines commanding officers course - known as "The Perisher" because of its low success rate - under Sandy Woodward who would commend the British taskforce during the Falkland's conflict in 1982. The payoff for coming through being handed his first command, in the submarine *Ocelot*.

He was then appointed the first commander of the new nuclear submarine *HMS Superb* in 1974.

David Ramsey was born in Hereford in 1937. His father was a civil engineer and his mother, Betty, was the daughter of the couturier Eli Mancus, and would model for his clothes.

As a child David would roam the countryside with his Welsh collie-foxhound cross by his side. He would fish on the River Wye or contemplate life in his treehouse in an old yew. "My parents never used to know where I was as I simply used to go out in the morning and return at suppertime".

He won a scholarship to Hereford Cathedral School, later transferring to Worcester Cathedral School, but trainspotting took precedence over music. Indeed, he was so passionate about steam trains that he would write to train companies asking if he could visit their depots to improve his knowledge.



Having joined the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve in 1953, Ramsey passed the civil service exam and in 1956 he was dispatched to the Royal Naval College at Dartmouth to train as an officer.

His first posting, in 1958, was in the aircraft carrier *HMS Centaur*. It would be two years before he saw his fiancée, Jane, whom he'd met at

a ballroom dancing class in Dartmouth in 1957. They were married in 1961 and had three children, Caroline, Christopher and Adam.

Ramsey spent the next few years rising through the ranks on various submarines. While serving as a third officer in *HMS Otter*, based in Faslane, Scotland, he recalled the febrile excitement

of being put on operational alert, loading the torpedoes. The submarine was being readied for war because of the Cuban crisis in October 1963.

His final posting was supervising a squadron of 12 submarines as staff officer of operations at *HMS Dolphin*, the Royal Navy submarine school in Gosport, Hampshire.

After retiring Ramsey became involved with the British Group Inter-Parliamentary Union, which "serves Britain's interests through advancing the parliamentary dimension of its foreign relations" He was appointed OBE in 1999 for services to the group.

Jane was killed in a car crash in 1972. Ramsey married Ghillie Richmond in 1974 but they divorced in 1982. He married his third wife, Abigail Grainge, in 1983, but she also predeceased him.

In the navy he had served in a variety of posts, from wine waiter to ship's medical officer. He learnt to love breakfasts of tinned tomatoes on fried bread and retained his ability to scan a horizon and spot objects miles away. He never lost his excellent timekeeping instilled in the service.

The only thing he did not master was how to deal with the seasickness that affected him at the start of every voyage. Luckily it always wore off.

David passed away peacefully at Queen Alexandra Hospital, Portsmouth, on Thursday 30th August 2018, aged 80, one day before his 81st birthday.