

OBITUARY for Rear Admiral Peter Gerald Hammersley CB OBE (known as Spam) 18 May 1928 – 16 January 2020



Rear Admiral 'Spam' Hammersley robed as Master of the Company

How would one describe Peter Hammersley, the gentlest of gentlemen?

Peter attended school at Denstone College in Staffordshire where his nickname was 'Ham'. During WW2 when ham was substituted by spam on the dinner table, so Peter's nickname changed to 'Spam' and stayed with him for life. His association with Denstone was equally lifelong, in later years as Chairman of Governors.

As a Naval man: Peter served for 37 years where he became the leading nuclear qualified and experienced officer in the Royal Navy. This culminated in his declared second most enjoyable appointment as Captain of the Naval Engineering College at Mandon with its 500 junior officer students and 300 instructors.

However, his career highlight was as the first Marine Engineer Officer of HMS DREADNOUGHT the Royal Navy's first nuclear powered submarine, with its US Navy/Westinghouse jointly designed propulsion reactor. Having been selected for this post in 1957 by Admiral of the

Fleet, Earl Mountbatten of Burma, Spam was seconded to the US Navy to gain his expertise.

The Allied nuclear powered submarine programme was the brainchild of the notoriously cantankerous American Admiral Herman Rickover who reputedly only made enemies, never friends. On completing his tour with the US Navy Peter asked to see Rickover, some 30 years and seven ranks his senior, to thank him for the opportunity given to him. In Spam's own words: "In May 1960, on leaving SKIPJACK, before returning to the UK, I went to Washington to say goodbye. I had requested a call on Rickover because I was determined to thank him. He kept me waiting for half an hour and when I went in, he said "You Brits will never succeed with Dreadnought." I disagreed and said that I doubted whether he really believed that, as he had helped us so much. He was then very pleasant, and I was able to thank him properly."

Peter's final role in the Royal Navy was as Chief Staff Officer Engineering to the Commander-in-Chief, Fleet during the Falklands War.

As a Liveryman: Livery number 37, clothed in 1984 and installed in April 1988 as the fifth Master Engineer. During his year Sousa's march "The Thunderer" was adopted as the Master's entrance music recalling Spam's time in charge of RNEC Mandon aka HMS THUNDERER where the then Clerk Cdr. Bryan Gibson (later Master Engineer 2007-8) had served under him. Peter and Cynthia paid for the design, manufacture and purchase of the Master's Lady's brooch worn by Cynthia that year and then presented by Peter to the Company to be worn by each succeeding Master's Lady.

Finally, and certainly the most important to Peter: the family man. Married on 15 August 1959, Peter and Cynthia enjoyed nearly 61 years of married life. Their two children, Daphne and Robert, five grandchildren and one great-grandchild bore witness to a much respected and much loved husband, father, and grandfather (Babu to the grandchildren). They recalled instances of his bonfire making, treasure hunt ability, barbecue chef, and holiday host during a very warm commemoration of his life at the Thanksgiving Service which was attended by many former naval associates, the Master and other liverymen, and a church full of friends, relations and members of his local community.

If anyone would like copies of any of the eulogies given by son Robert, the grandchildren, Vice Admiral Hill or the obituary published on 18 February in the Daily Telegraph, please contact me on d.scahill@btinternet.com

David Scahill Master Engineer 2012-13