

OBITUARY

A life remembered: Chris Day CBE

by Rob Batiste

CHRS DAY CBE was a legal Titan. But the father of three, and husband to Jose, was so much more than that. If the strength and quality of a man can be judged on how easily they can fit into any area of life and immediately feel comfortable with anyone, be they royalty, judges, blockies, the disadvantaged or young schoolchildren, he was peerless. To be that sort of person you have to have real humility and Chris had it in abundance.

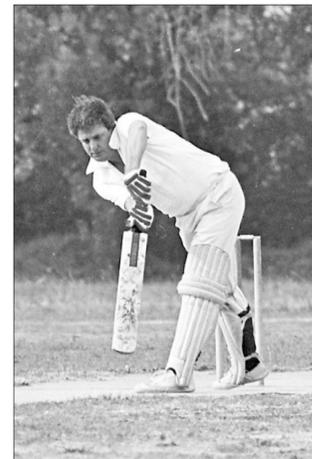
Wherever the former Deputy Bailiff, HM Comptroller and HM Procureur, Siam Cup rugby star and opening batsman went, he fitted in. He was at home everywhere. His influence on island life was huge, as it was on his now grown-up children, Oliver, Sarah and Estelle, and their young children.

'Don't get ideas above your station' was a phrase he often used around the family home and he hated pomp and ceremony. To him, life was family, sport, gardening, travelling and taking his time. 'He would not rush... ever,' said daughter Sarah.

Possessed of a photographic memory, his sphere of influence was everywhere in island life, until the illness which finally declared his innings at 75 took a hold. Apart from his commitment to being a good husband, father, grandfather to Louis, Robin and Ruby, and also 'manager, coach and captain of the Day Team', as his death notice in this paper neatly put it, he was quietly influential all over the island in his roles as chairman of Guernsey Riding for the Disabled, as part of the Cobo Community Centre fundraising team, trustee at the Guernsey Sports Commission, Vale Recreation Club, and the King George V Playing Fields, chairman of the Guernsey Friends of Biberach Group that he co-founded and as a patron of La Societe Guernesaise. He was a great friend of Sark, where he had a home, and until the end of 2016, when illness took over, he had completed more than 15 years as a volunteer classroom assistant at Hautes Capelles Primary School and before that at Castel Primary.

'He started out, in 2000, doing an hour a week and by the end he was up to seven hours a week,' said Sarah Day, herself a teacher.

'He was heartbroken that he could not continue,' she said, adding: 'Seventeen years of children have had the benefit of his mathematical wisdom'. There was also the time when the schoolchildren enacted the 'Trial of the Three Little Pigs' and in his role as the judge he dressed in his full legal regalia. Humour and the ability to laugh at



Man of the match: On his way to a match-winning 94 for Pessimists in the 1976 Guernsey Knockout final.

(17627306)



A trip to the palace: Chris Day receives his CBE in 2003.

oneself was another big part of his makeup.

'Teaching was his love from the very start,' said Jose, who met her future husband for the first time in Maison Carre in 1958 and married him six years later.

Chris Day was born in Horrabridge in Devon and attended Gresham's School in Norfolk before moving on to Magdalen College, Oxford and Gray's Inn. One of three boys, his father was the principal of Elizabeth College during the 1950s and 1960s, which was directly responsible for his chance meeting with Guernsey girl Jose Guillemette. She recalled how the newly-married couple came to end up in Kenya where, for four years, Chris taught at the Thika High School.

'We were sitting in our flat near Victoria Station on a rainy afternoon while reading an advertisement in The Observer which posed the question: 'Have you ever thought about teaching in Kenya?'

'It was a Sunday. We looked at each other, Chris made some form of approving "ooh", and the next day he went to enquire. Later that year we were in Kenya.'

Jose, a nurse, went out to Kenya seven and a half months pregnant and as she looked after their young daughter Sarah the sports-mad history, English and sports teacher set about his duties.

Away from school he got involved in amateur dramatics but his main interests were in rugby, in which he represented East Africa Central Province, and cricket. But during a rugby game Chris broke a bone in his back and a highly-promising playing career, which had already included several Siam Cup wins while on fleeting visits to his parents in Guernsey, was ruined.

'They ripped the door down from the clubhouse to use as a stretcher,' Jose recalled.

'That really put paid to his rugby. We came back to the UK because of



The young scrum half from Blackheath.

Sarah's schooling needs and Chris had decided to complete his law studies.'

For a while the growing Day family lived in Kent while Chris completed his law degree at Gray's Inn, filling in spare hours with a job in a bakery. In 1971 the Days moved to Guernsey full-

time and he was called to the Guernsey Bar. Then came the opportunity to move into private practice under the wing of Peter Collas, the father of the current Bailiff. 'Peter Collas took him on for his pupillage while Chris went off to Caen [to do the necessary French language study] and he did it in half the normal time,' said Jose. Before long he was asked to be a partner with Peter Collas, then his own name came into the legal practice brands of Collas Day, later Collas, Day and Rowland. His legal contemporaries held him in the highest regard.

Current Bailiff Sir Richard Collas, who earlier in the week paid his own tribute at the States meeting, said: 'He was one of the best, if not the best, local judge to preside over the Royal Court.'

'He was a great character, an all-round good guy with a phenomenal intellect, a great sense of humour and a deep-seated sense of fairness, justice and belief in equality of opportunity for all. 'Chris was a true islander and a fervent defender of the island's customs and traditions, not only our legal customs. 'He liked nothing more than being able to take part in the West Show pageant wearing a guernsey.'

Sir de Vic Carey, with whom Chris served as Comptroller for 10 years, Procureur and as Deputy Bailiff for four years, delivered his own appreciation. 'He was a man of great loyalty and discretion. He would, however, helpfully speak up in private when he thought you were going astray. 'His early years as a keen student of history at Oxford and as a teacher in the wide spaces of Africa led him often to see events in this prosperous little island through the other end of the telescope, which was not always what his clients, private and public, wanted.

'This "disinterestedness", to use an obsolescent word, proved invaluable when

he became a judge and was able to slice through the cluttered thinking of lesser mortals.

'These qualities will be seen to live on in his judgements. He must at times have felt like Gulliver in Lilliput, but never showed it.'

Practice partner and former Bailiff Sir Geoffrey Rowland said: 'The Bailiff has lost a very special character whose contribution spanned law and sporting endeavour'.

He added: 'As an advocate in private practice, from the outset he demonstrated formidable intellect while always being approachable.'

He was taught in pupillage that clients paid for clear opinions which would be useful to them, and not doubts. He respected that advice.

'As a Law Officer of the Crown he will be remembered for the range of his skills and the quality of his opinions.'

'Importantly, he was a staunch defender of the separate constitutional position and interests of Guernsey, Alderney and Sark.'

'As Deputy Bailiff he prepared thoroughly, was in total command of his court and was respected by all who appeared before him, and in his time in the States of Deliberation as a Law Officer and Deputy Bailiff he spoke economically and in a very focussed way.

'If a one-word answer sufficed, the answer was limited to one word, coupled often with a ready smile directed at the questioner.

'He certainly did not admire members who had made no attempt to master the skill of speaking succinctly.

'As Bailiff I was grateful when Chris agreed to be the independent chairman of the Code of Conduct Panel, and admired from a distance the way he discharged that duty.

'I learned much from him, cherish the memories and will always be grateful to him.'

In the New Year's Honours List of 2002 Chris was awarded a CBE for services to the Crown.

At the time, in a Guernsey Press interview, he admitted that 'teaching was really my instinct'.

Away from the corridors of Crown work and Court Row, he let his hair down with a deep interest in sport and his two main passions, rugby and cricket.

It was on the rugby fields that he first made his mark on the island.

He was still six months away from his 18th birthday when his father gave written permission for him to be selected in the 1959 Siam Cup.

Young Chris, who also played for the strong Blackheath club in London, lined up at scrum half and with his brother Phillip as captain, Guernsey recorded a rare Siam Cup win.

Before departing for Kenya, he headed back to the island to win two more Siams and play his part in a draw.

It's an overall representative record that all the modern Guernsey Siam Cup stars would love to match.

Years later, when fully ensconced in island life, he took over the coaching of the Guernsey 1st XV and at the same time took on responsibility for junior player development.

Further down the road and behind the scenes he was in charge of the club's disciplinary committee, a serious role but one he managed to encompass with his own brand of humour.

To current Guernsey Rugby Club president Adie Le Page, who played under Chris as a coach, he was nothing less than a hero: 'A fantastic bloke,' as he described him.

In the summer months and before the sacrosanct annual three-week family holiday in Sark ended his cricket season prematurely, he showed himself to be an equally able batsman as he was scrum half.

'A very good player,' recalled his former Pessimists opening partner, Bryan Preston.

'He was very steady and really a five-day Test type of cricketer at times. A very correct player. A really nice chap and brilliant with everyone,' he said.

But despite that tendency to be defensive, Chris could always and did explode into action from time to time.

And during the the golden days of the domestic club game when the annual GCA Knockout final was the high point of the season, arguably no one innings



Former Deputy Bailiff Chris Day at the Bailiff's Chambers after the announcement that he had been made a CBE. (17627294)

was more memorable than his man-of-the-match effort in 1976. His 94 for Pessimists that August afternoon took the game away from favourites St Martin's, who were chasing down the target until Day swooped at short extra-cover to take one of the finest catches seen in the local game and dismiss the dangerous Alan Lewis. It was about the same time that he smashed an unbeaten Division One evening league century, a rare feat. In later years when daughter Sarah was

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Bailiff Sir Richard Collas

part of the Sirens women's team, Chris was their coach and mentor. He also played representative hockey as a goalkeeper for the island third and fourth XIs.

His great friend and fellow hockey stalwart, Peter Martel, said that Chris was a key man in the highly-social Guernsey Toms touring side, which went to places such as Gibraltar, Angers, Antibes and Amsterdam.

'He and I founded the "Ledger" inter-island match for vintage and veteran players and he wrote up all the rules. This year's game in September is the 30th.'

Son Oliver recalls his father listening to cricket and boxing late at night on the radio and when it came to watching TV sport, Chris would cheer for Kenya and whoever was the underdog. Chris loved cycling on his old 'Pebbles' three-gear ladies' bike and took it off to the UK and France for long rides, often with his children.

Although well-travelled – he and Jose visited their daughter Estelle six times in Cambodia – he loved the county of Norfolk and yearned to go back to Malaysia.

Gardening at the rear of his Vazon home was another great passion.

Chris was learned, highly respected and loyal, but always fun to be with. The island has, indeed, lost a very special character.



Meeting Prince Charles.

(17627298)