A service to celebrate the life of

PETER HOPKIRK

Thursday 22nd January 2015 at 11.30am
St Bride’s Fleet Street
Presley bids farewell to arms

THE PERFECT SOLDIER PACKS UP TO GO BACK TO THE ROCK 'N' ROLLING LIFE
AND HE LEAVES BEHIND PRISCILLA, HIS 16-YEAR-OLD SCHOOLGIRL FRIEND

Expressman on-the-spot Hopkirk is seized and searched by Havana secret policemen

WAR JITTERS HIT CUBA

Castro says

It's

U.S.

fault

Expressman is arrested

Expressman Hopkirk freed

HELL DOWN BELOW

43 die-then rescuers hear SOS tapping
We welcome you all here today to celebrate the life of Peter Hopkirk. Peter had a most extraordinary life in what were extraordinary times. Indeed, it was a life that might almost have been dreamt up by Kipling or Buchan. Or have come from the pages of the real-life adventures he collected.

Thrown into secret police cells in Havana and Beirut. Hijacked. A bag always packed so he could fly out to cover the biggest stories of the day, from the assassination of Martin Luther King to the June '67 War. It was a useful — if unorthodox — foundation for the six books he went on to write.

His school life, in comparison to his later life, was rather undistinguished — apart from on the playing field. He showed little interest in academic subjects, and was frequently in hot water with the authorities. According to his mother he loved to learn but hated to be taught. In retrospect, perhaps these were rather useful attributes for a future reporter.

His real adventures began in 1949, as a National Service subaltern in the King’s African Rifles. From bandit-hunting on camel-back to near-death experiences with charging buffalo and scorpion venom, the game was afoot. No office job was ever going to satisfy him, and so he became a journalist.

Peter would have been astonished by the many wonderful tributes received by his family since his death. Indeed, he might have felt undeserving of this occasion, for he once said of his reporting career: “It may sound dangerous, but being a reporter in today’s hot-spots is a thousand times more so and I greatly admire the present generation of reporters, who appear to be fearless. But I envy them too!”

So today in St Bride’s let us also celebrate Peter’s heroes, and pray for all those who continue to risk their lives or have been unjustly imprisoned.
Peter Hopkirk was an out-and-out hero to the historians and travel writers of my generation. Like many of us who later went on to write about Central Asia or the Silk Route, I was leaving school and beginning my travels just as Peter was producing that amazing run of books that he published in the 1980s. Like everyone else, I packed them in my backpack and went off to follow in his footsteps.

I have beside me the now-dogeared copy of The Great Game he gifted me as a wedding present in which he wrote: ‘To William — who, had he been born a century earlier, would doubtless have been playing the Great Game, with best wishes Peter.’ The arrival of that book — which was the direct inspiration for my Return of a King — was the nearest thing I ever had to a graduation ceremony as a writer.”

William Dalrymple | author and historian
Peter mentored half-formed writers with a generosity of spirit that was both graceful and robust. I carry his counsel with me at all times, and in all places.”

Justine Hardy | journalist and author

Order of Service

Introit
Locus Iste by Anton Bruckner

Service conducted by the
Rev Canon Dr Alison Joyce

Welcome & Opening Prayer
The Rector

Hymn
Praise, my soul, the King of heaven;
To his feet thy tribute bring.
Ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven,
Who like me his praise should sing?
Praise him! Praise him!
Praise him! Praise him!
Praise the Everlasting King,
Praise him for his grace and favour
To our fathers in distress;
Praise him still the same for ever,
Slow to chide, and swift to bless.
Praise him! Praise him!
Praise him! Praise him!
Praisous in his faithfulness.

Father-like, he tends and spares us;
Well our feeble frame he knows;
In his hands he gently bears us,
Rescues us from all our foes.
Praise him! Praise him!
Praise him! Praise him!
Widely as his mercy flows.

Angels, help us to adore him;
Ye behold him face to face;
Sun and moon, bow down before him;
Dwellers all in time and space.
Praise him! Praise him!
Praise him! Praise him!
Praise with us the God of grace.

First Reading
Elizabeth Hopkirk
Psalm 46

Choir
Kyrie from Haydn’s Mass in Time of War
Nobody else alive could handle this terrific subject with such a combination of skill, knowledge, enthusiasm and insight. Peter Hopkirk is truly the Laureate of the Great Game.”

Jan Morris
Prayers
The Rector

Hymn
Immortal, invisible, God only wise,
In light inaccessible, hid from our eyes,
Most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,
Almighty, victorious, thy great name we praise.

Unresting, unhasting, and silent as light,
Nor wanting, nor wasting, thou rulest in might;
Thy justice like mountains high soaring above
Thy clouds, which are fountains of goodness and love.

To all life thou givest — to both great and small;
In all life thou livest, the true life of all;
We blossom and flourish as leaves on the tree,
And wither and perish — but nought changeth thee.

Great Father of glory, pure Father of light,
Thine angels adore thee, all veiling their sight;
All laud we would render: O help us to see
‘Tis only the splendour of light hideth thee.

Blessing
The Rector

Choir
The Trumpet Shall Sound from Handel’s Messiah

There can be few more fascinating subjects than the Great Game, or few authors better qualified to write about it.”

Sir Fitzroy Maclean
Peter’s evocative prose and warm and positive nature were a great inspiration to me. When I sent him my first (self-published) book, asking for an endorsement, his response was to invite me for tea and to introduce me to his editor at John Murray. That introduction helped launch my writing career. Thereafter we would meet for tea once a year and his encouragement and generosity of spirit were always unfailing.

His hunger for adventure and travel were also infectious. And sometimes, just sometimes, he could be persuaded to talk about his adventures in Fleet Street and I found myself transported into the real-life world of Scoop.”

Tarquin Hall | author and journalist
THE SIR PERCY SYKES MEMORIAL MEDAL

CITATION

The Sir Percy Sykes Memorial Medal, instituted in 1947 by the Sykes family in memory of Brigadier-General Sir Percy Sykes KCMG CB, scholar, soldier and diplomat, who was also an Honorary Secretary of the Society from 1932 until his death in 1945, may be awarded to any distinguished traveller, writer or other person who is deemed to have increased man’s knowledge of and stimulated man’s interest in Asian countries, or done work furthering cultural relations between the Commonwealth and Asian countries.

On 2nd December 1999 the Council of the Society resolved to award the Sir Percy Sykes Memorial Medal in 1999 to Mr Peter Hopkirk in recognition of his important contribution to increasing man’s knowledge of and interest in Central Asia through his extensive travels, scholarship and writings.

In pursuance of this Resolution the award is made and this citation presented to

Mr Peter Hopkirk

by the President of the Society on this Twelfth day of July 1999, in witness whereof the President and the Chairman of Council have set their signatures on behalf of the Society.

[Signatures]
1949-51 National Service with the King’s African Rifles

1954-56 Reporter on the Sunday Express

1956-57 Editor of West African Drum, based in Accra

1958-59 ITN reporter and newscaster

1959-62 Daily Express, including spells in New York (imprisoned during Bay of Pigs invasion) and Beirut (imprisoned and expelled)

1966-85 The Times (hijacked by terrorists, 1974)

1980-96 Six books published (including The Great Game, 1990)