

## ADAM GURDON

Adam Gurdon, aka The Brigadier, came to Burgh village at 11 years old in June 1942. He gives a very vivid account of life in the village in his memoirs, "A Chance to Serve", and I quote:

"We moved to Burgh House in June 1942, there were 4 acres of garden and 16 acres of water meadow. For us boys the garden and surrounding countryside were a paradise. The tiny village of Burgh had a population of about 100. There was a post Office (now Larkshayes) where we were sold sweets by Mrs Stammers, and a blacksmith, Stanley Baxter.

As children, we all were expected to help at harvest time. This was the first time I had tasted beer that was brought by Mr Watson of The Dog in great big Flagon! [Because it was war-time] The Royal Observer Corps manned the top of Burgh Mill day and night to record planes flying over. On Christmas Day I used to climb up to give them some Christmas pudding and a slug of brandy!"

In his memoirs Adam talks about his army service all over the world and then joyfully exclaims that in 1970 he, "came back home to [his] beloved St Botolph's." His father having been Churchwarden and Lay Reader, Adam followed in his footsteps and served as PCC secretary, Churchwarden, deanery organiser and chairman of the Diocesan Board of Finance, "heaving [it] into the 20<sup>th</sup> Century."!!! Thanks to Adam's diligence, St Botolph's now has heat, light, automatic locking doors and alarmed property. He says, "I feel entirely at home with God here and plan to be buried in the churchyard."

My father's "hobbies" have always been his home and village. Never more happy than when organising Remembrance Sunday services, choosing a rose for the flower show or sharing yarns with fellow old-timers in The Dog; he was often seen latterly "speeding" down the road to Grundisburgh en route for William's Stores new Coffee Shop on his mobility scooter!

After a lifetime of service Adam Brampton Douglas Gurdon lies peacefully in the churchyard waiting to greet you as you climb the path and keeping an eye on things, as usual! RIP.

(Miranda Barclay, daughter)

The following is taken from The Times

## Brigadier Adam Gurdon obituary

Soldier who helped to ensure peaceful and orderly elections in Rhodesia in 1979 as chief of staff of the British Monitoring Force

June 24 2019, 12:01am, The Times

Serious-minded, professional and with experience of Africa, Adam Gurdon was the obvious choice as chief of staff for the Commonwealth Monitoring Force to oversee elections in Rhodesia, modern Zimbabwe, in 1979.

The effective handover of power was a powder keg. Many of the potential electorate were guerrilla fighters of the Maoist Zanu party or of the Soviet Union-backed Zapu party, who together had fought the security forces of prime minister Ian Smith's white minority government to a standstill. Smith had therefore revoked his unilateral declaration of independence (UDI) and appealed for help from the British government. After extended talks at Lancaster House the black majority parties agreed to the interim return of British colonial rule in return for national elections.

The first problem was to persuade the guerrillas to trust the monitoring force and emerge from the forest. After an anxious pause, a second lieutenant in charge of an assembly point detected movement among the trees. He stepped forward, unarmed, raised his arms and called out: "Welcome, welcome, come in, come in." And in they came, first just a dribble, then a torrent of men all armed to the teeth.

Working under Major-General John Acland, the methodical Gurdon issued instructions to the assembly points and set up camps for the now former terrorists to wait, housed and fed, in anticipation of casting their votes.

The elections were conducted largely in peace and without intimidation. Robert Mugabe, who at the time appeared moderate and progressive, was elected prime minister. Gurdon was appointed CBE.

Adam Brampton Douglas Gurdon was born in Suffolk in 1931, the son of Major-General Edward Gurdon and his wife Elizabeth (née Wilson). Adam was educated at Rugby School and intended to undertake National Service in his father's first regiment, the Rifle Brigade, but on hearing that the Black Watch, in which his father had latterly served, was due to sail for Korea, he switched his choice to them. He took part in the Battle of the Hook and in November 1952 led a daring patrol with a Royal Engineer officer to establish the occupancy, or otherwise, of caves in an opposing feature held by the Chinese. Subsequently he served in Kenya during the Mau Mau insurgency and in the Military Operations directorate of the MoD, for which he was appointed OBE in 1973.

In 1958 he married Gillian, daughter of Colonel Charles Thomson of the Black Watch. They had four daughters: Miranda Barclay, a teacher at Woodbridge School, Suffolk; Madeleine (Lady Lloyd Webber), a company director who is married to Andrew Lloyd Webber, the composer; Melanie Gurdon, a horse physiotherapist; and Mary-Lou, wife of John Aitchison, the wildlife photographer. All survive him.

He retired from the army in 1985 after three years working in the Cabinet Office as the liaison co-ordinator with the Ministry of Defence, including the period of the Falklands conflict.

A committed Christian, he returned to Suffolk to develop his fascination with medieval church architecture. In 1986 he became the administrator of the Open Churches Trust, which is devoted to making churches, many of them not in full-time use, available to the public for viewing and use. The discovery that the principal church insurance company charged smaller premiums for unlocked churches than for those generally locked, on the basis that locking suggested to thieves that the building held items worth stealing, led to a breakthrough. Under Gurdon's stewardship from 1986 to 2002 the percentage of churches left open for routine public viewing rose from 40 to 80 per cent. He also introduced the idea of churches having wifi to attract visitors. He served for 24 years as church warden of his local church in the village of Burgh, near Ipswich.

Gurdon also organised appeals for restoration work on Chelmsford Cathedral and for a project to provide a song school, refectory and vestry for St Edmundsbury Cathedral in Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk. As the finance director on the diocesan board, Gurdon helped to raise £1.8 million for the project, which was completed in the 1990s. He also helped to raise funds for the construction of the cathedral tower, which was completed in 2005. In 2002 he was appointed a lay canon of St Edmundsbury Cathedral.

Tall, upright, with a monocle invariably clamped on his left eye and a distinctive voice, Gurdon was a well-known figure in the "Rag" — the Army & Navy Club in London. On occasion, he could be a fierce critic of the club's management if any aspect strayed from the standard he had grown to expect from a London services club. He seldom failed to attend gatherings of the informal "bar flies", who met routinely in the ground floor bar to discuss the national and international news, any failings in the club management or, discreetly, of members whose conduct invited reproach.

Only gardening, another lifelong passion, matched his enthusiasm for architecture and church matters; he was never more content than when seated on his motorised mower bringing his lawns up to perfection with perfect contrasting straight lines.

**Brigadier Adam Gurdon, CBE, soldier and churchman, was born on May 4, 1931. He died on May 22, 2019, aged 88**