

John Barry Elliott

Conisborough 7.11.33 - London 28.3.24





A Celebration of Barry's Life

12.7.24

Highgate Cemetery

10:30 - 10:45am: East Gate Entrance –
everyone to meet

Burial of the ashes

Walk through Waterlow Park
to Lauderdale House

Lauderdale House

11:45 - 12:00pm: Arrival

12:00pm: Remembering Barry –
led by the celebrant Kate Hobson

12:45pm: Refreshments in the Lower Gallery

Guests depart at 3pm

Welcome

Thanks to everyone for joining this celebration of Barry's life. He was known to all of us in different ways – growing up with him; as a work colleague; enjoying one of his interests with him; as a friend or a member of his family. He was well loved and lived a varied and interesting life.

Each of us will have our own special memories of him. Please share these by writing in the memorial book at Lauderdale House or contributing to the online memorial book, which you can access by contacting Kathy at kathy.a.elliott1@outlook.com. We will all be interested to read your contributions and they can be shared with others, including his youngest grandchildren as they grow up and wonder about him.

We hope you will also share memories with each other and learn about the different parts of his life. We have put together a slide show of photos of him for the celebration. If you have photos you'd like to share after today please add these to the online memorial. We will have a few of his pots on display, with some that you are welcome to take home with you.

Instead of bringing flowers to the burial and celebration we are asking people to donate to a pottery charity. If you are interested in contributing please contact Kathy who will send details of the charity.



▲ *Barry at the Curzon, painted by Kathy Elliott*

Barry's Life

Growing up in Yorkshire

Barry's memories of his early childhood in Yorkshire were vivid. He and his brother Peter, who was two years older, lived with their grandparents, mother and two uncles in a two-up, two down brick terraced house in the coal-mining village of Conisbrough, near Doncaster. Their father, Douglas Elliott, had died of pneumonia a few weeks after Barry was born in November 1933. Cousins who lived in Bradford, Marilyn, Patricia and Roger, were family 'for life'.

The war years brought bombing raids to nearby cities, with the occasional one landing in the village, as well as war treasures and stories that shaped the world of a young boy. His mother (Laura)



▲ *Barry outside his childhood home in Conisbrough*
worked, saved to move her family to a house she bought nearby, and ran a household in which her sons were required to help.

An opportunity for boys from single parent families led to his mother sending him to a boarding school in Hampshire when he was thirteen. This was a very different and tough time for Barry.



▲ *Lord Wandsworth College*



▲ *Barry as a young boy*

National Service and University

Finding his way forward after graduating began with his obligatory, two year National Service with the armed forces. At the end of the basic training he was asked 'Do you want to learn Russian?' The lack of recruits with a high degree of competence in written and spoken Russian began a radical change in his life. He progressed from the initial training at the Cornish Light Infantry Base, high on Bodmin Moor in Cornwall, to the Joint Services School for Linguists in London, an offshoot of the London School of Russian and Eastern European Studies in Russell Square, where he accepted the offer of a place to take a University degree. He studied Russian literature, economy, and geography; Slavonic philology – Polish, Bulgarian and Ukrainian; and another



▲ *Barry in the armed forces*



▲ *Barry's graduation photo*

language – French literature at Birkbeck College. He greatly enjoyed the course and new interests, such as the theatre, graduating with a 2.1 in 1955.

Memories of interviews, both before his National Service and after graduation, stayed with Barry. They were in unfamiliar worlds where it wasn't clear the reasons for the questions or where he could fit. At the same time he was earning money doing occasional jobs at the Post Office in Farringdon, on the buses and in a secondary school in Doncaster, and in a food production factory, as well as doing translations.



▲ *Barry (back, right) at university*

Working in Germany

First jobs after graduation brought choices and decisions about how he spent his time, both when earning money and outside work. Some of the choices led to lifelong skills (learning typing; reading for pleasure) and interests (theatre), while others drove him forward (being bored at work). At first these were in England, but an opportunity took him to Germany in 1957. 'He bought himself a German – English dictionary and phrasebook and began to teach himself the basics.' His world was expanding, learning about the perspectives and ways of life in another country. Although organisations changed there were opportunities to build up his savings and make plans for purchases and travel. He never forgot his enjoyment of sailing and diving in the Mediterranean during these years.

In 1961, now living in Munich he began using his Russian and other language skills in radio, progressing and enjoying the jobs and the people.

In 1961 he married Catherine Bryner who had grown up in Harbin in China, the daughter of a Swiss businessman and a former Russian actress. They divorced in 1964, and Barry, with the support of his mother, took on the care of their child, Carolyn (now known as Kerry), and Catherine moved to Australia.



▲ *Barry and Catherine*



▲ *Barry with his mother Laura*



▲ *Barry sailing in the Mediterranean*

Barry met Wendy nee Tarleton, also raising a daughter, Robin, and they were married in 1967. Wendy was born in New York and brought up in California. She studied drama and English at University before leaving the United States in 1964, living in Sweden and France before moving to Germany. Their daughter, Heather was born in 1968.



▲ *Barry and Wendy with Carolyn (now Kerry) and Robin*



▲ *Barry and Wendy sunbathing in Munich with their daughter Heather*

The family lived in a northern suburb of Munich until 1970 when they decided to move to England. Barry, with support from colleagues, got a job at the BBC Monitoring Service near Reading, and they bought a house in Sonning Common. Thirteen years in Germany had come to an end.

London and the BBC

Working for the BBC brought other opportunities and he joined the World Service, moving to London and buying a house in East Twickenham. After he and Wendy divorced in 1981 they maintained a shared interest in supporting Kerry, Robin and Heather, and he started a new life in North London. His work at the BBC World Service (Bush House), travel, enjoying theatre and music in London, seeing family and friends, and developing interests such as pottery filled his time.

Barry was deeply committed to his work at Bush House, taking great pride in the quality of the broadcasting and learning new skills as a manager and leader. He valued the range of people he met and worked with, the opportunities to travel, and the challenges. He spent more than a decade – during the ‘Brezhnev years’ in the Russian Service, before moving into a departmental headship in the South-East European Service, responsible for the former Yugoslavia, Romania and Bulgaria. In 1988 he took on the Central European and Finnish Service providing leadership during the changes in Europe. A final role took him to Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.



▲ *Barry at the BBC*

After a long distance correspondence he married Kathy nee Dunn in Vancouver in 1981, living first at the Angel in North London, with Kerry and Lydia (born in 1985) and then in Tufnell Park. These years were busy with many visitors; demanding careers; and 'the children' finishing their education and taking first steps into independence, relationships and work. Barry continued to love travel and exploring in the UK, often with family from Canada; in Europe alongside work; and globally.



▲ *Barry, Kathy and their daughter Lydia*

Retirement and new interests

After 23 years at the BBC, mandatory retirement at 60 brought another change in his life.

He took on running and developing the house and taking care of Lydia; an allotment in Muswell Hill; doing NVQ qualifications in pottery; genealogy projects; planning family holidays; supporting Kathy in her public health career and being part of her Canadian family; enjoying and contributing to his children's and grandchildren's lives; and cherishing his freedom to travel – his 'walkabouts'. He missed 'life at the BBC' but embraced the new responsibilities and opportunities.

Barry's skill and knowledge of pottery grew. He found inspiration from other potters and through classes, workshops and exhibitions.

There was always the next project and many visitors left the house with a pot or two. We all have our favourites - raku work, moon vases, dishes for meals, and many more. He loved visiting friends and family and recognising one of his pots.



▲ *Barry outside St George's Avenue*

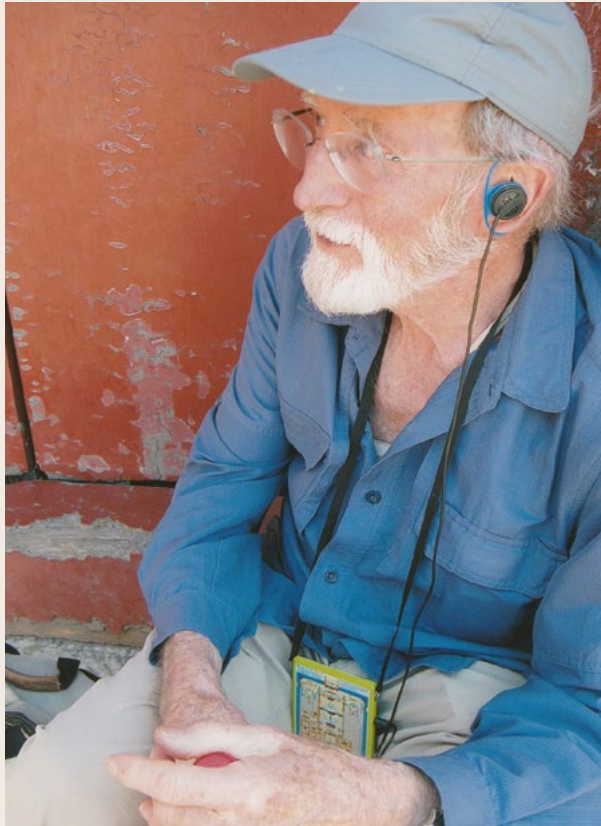


▲ *One of Barry's raku creations*

In 2019 Barry and Kathy started on 'this was our life' project revisiting and sorting the thousands of pictures taken over the years together. The London houses lived in (Denton Road, Bromfield Street, St Georges Ave, Woodsome Road) and the people they had shared time with. There were many holidays and travels in the UK and other countries. The binders of pictures emerged capturing those hugely enjoyable times. Barry always had time for another adventure or place to explore.

During his 80's Barry faced operations and changes in his health. He worked hard to recuperate and then keep independent and fit. Each day brought purpose – usually making pottery; exercise – often walking to Lauderdale House or on Hampstead Heath; people – family, neighbours and friends; learning – books and the BBC; going to favourite London places; and contributing to running the house. He enjoyed cooking and gardening, and appreciated the family, friends and professionals who supported and spent time with him.

He died at the barber, on 28 March, 2024 (aged 90) with a plan for the day which included all the things he loved.



▲ *Barry travelling in China*

