



OBITUARIES & DEATHS

2023



Remembering
the lives that
helped shape
the UCS
community.

Humphrey Taman Davies

1947 – 2021 / OG 1955 – 1965

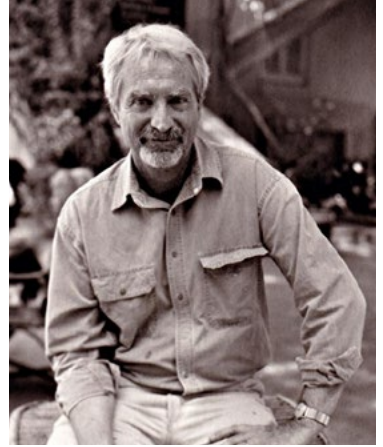
Humphrey was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer in the summer of 2021 in the middle of the Covid pandemic. He was flown from Cairo to London in November for treatment, which unfortunately proved unsuccessful and he died on November 12th. He had been able to marry his long-time partner Gassim Hassan shortly before his death.

When many people are enjoying a sedate retirement Humphrey was at the peak of attainment as a literary translator of Arabic. His translation of *The Yacoubian Building* by Alaa Al-Aswany was a best seller. He was awarded the prestigious Banipal Prize for Arabic Translation both in 2006 and 2010 as well as the English Pen “Writers in Translation” award in 2006 and right until the end of his life he was at work on his translations.

For those of us who were in *History Transitus* in 1963 this would not have been a surprise. His intellect and breadth of knowledge were

acknowledged by us all. Adrian Runswick taught us English, while “Bingo” Darlaston and Ian McGregor taught history. They took delight in reading aloud Humphrey’s essays as examples of how an essay should be written. Humphrey’s interests were wide: apart from literature he was a keen bird watcher and he enjoyed playing the viola in the school orchestra along with his brother Hugh, a talented musician who went on to become an orchestral violinist of note.

Humphrey went up to Jesus College with a scholarship to read English in 1964. The other English Scholar in his year, the future playwright David Hare, recalled that “the moment I heard Humphrey talking about poetry, it was clear to me – who was truly clever and who was not”. Despite his prowess at English, after a term Humphrey switched to Arabic. Leaving Jesus with a first in 1968 he went to study at the American University in Cairo before joining Oxford University Press as their representative in the Middle East.



He later returned to Cairo to help with the preparation of a dictionary of colloquial Egyptian Arabic. There he met his future wife Kiki, an American ethnomusicologist. They moved on to Berkeley, California where Humphrey received his PhD. He then had a teaching post in Tucson, Arizona where I visited them in 1980. He and Kiki were wonderful hosts. Humphrey's home-made pasta was a joy to eat. We visited the local desert museum where Humphrey took delight in explaining to me the ecology of the region.

Academia was not for Humphrey and Kiki – he found the petty squabbling distasteful and from 1983 he worked for NGOs and funding institutions in a number of countries in the Arab World including Save the Children in Palestine and Tunisia and the Ford Foundation in Sudan.

He returned to Cairo in the late 1990s to work on the dictionary again and began a career as a literary translator, translating from colloquial

as well as classical Arabic works. He was careful only to translate works he truly liked. He would make three drafts and then wait a month before making the final draft. Whenever he translated the work of a living author, he would quiz them thoroughly to make sure he had understood their intentions correctly.

Humphrey and Kiki divorced in 2002, though they remained close friends. She, their children Clare and James and his elder brother Hugh, survive him.

From **Anthony Stoll** (OG 1958 – 1964)
and **Hugh Davies** (OG 1955 – 1963)

John Richard Wilson

1931 – 2023 / OG 1944 – 1949

John Richard Wilson, OG 1944–1949 was a distinguished academic and long-time professor at the University of Alberta. He died on February 21, 2023 at the University of Alberta Hospital in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

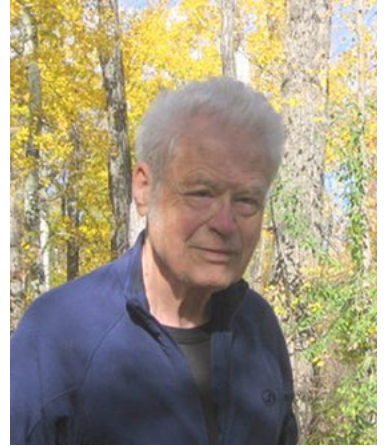
He was born on June 16, 1931 in Oxford, to Frank Percy Wilson and Joanna (Perry-Keene) Wilson. He is survived by his wife of 55 years Natalya (Natasha) Wilson; son David Wilson (Michelle) of Atlanta, Georgia; daughter Antonia (Toni) Blucher (Gregory) of Ellicott City, Maryland; grandchildren Katherine, Jacob and Elizabeth Wilson, and Andrew, Julia and Sarah Blucher. John's great grandchildren include Ashwin Vengurlekar, Casey and Julian Beach, and Matthew and Evangelina Baldea.

John's parents were Oxford academics. His father was a literary scholar and bibliographer, and editor of the *Oxford History of English Literature*, *Oxford Dictionary of English Proverbs*

as well as many works on Elizabethan drama. He was the tutor of C. S. Lewis.

John's studies were disrupted by World War II when his parents, to avoid the Blitz, sent him to be cared for by an academic friend, Herbert John Davis, President of Smith College, in Northampton, Massachusetts. On return to England, John attended UCS and then went on to do BA and MA studies at Lincoln College, Oxford. His war-time stay in the US prompted him to choose the University of California, Berkeley, for doctoral studies in Classics where he was a Woodrow Wilson Scholar.

He pursued academic work in the US and taught Classics, Greek and Latin at Indiana University, Bloomington; and Cornell University in Ithaca, New York. In 1971, he came to Edmonton with his wife Natasha, a Russian specialist, to join the Department of Classics, Faculty of Arts, at the University of Alberta. John



became a full professor in 1979 and served as Classics Department Chair from 1982 to 1987. He taught a variety of courses and published extensively. After retirement in 1996, he served as Emeritus Professor. A former student noted: “As a Professor of Classics, John’s knowledge and enthusiasm brought to life the works of ancient writers such as Thucydides, Euripides and Aristophanes making them almost contemporary and relevant.”

John was a witty conversationalist and avidly kept up on world affairs through various subscriptions including *The Economist*. Because of failing vision, he listened to audio books among his favourites economic and political histories. He was a gifted pianist having studied from an early age with Leonie Hock Gombrich, Austrian-born and trained pianist, and mother of art historian E. H. Gombrich. Until the end of his life, he spent many hours at his grand piano playing the music of favourite composers. John was also an avid runner and walker.

The funeral service took place at St. Barbara Russian Orthodox Cathedral with interment at St. Mary’s Russian Greek-Orthodox Cemetery in Nisku. Alberta.

From **Hugh and Adriana Davies**

Mike Lewis

1947 – 2023 / *Former Staff 1985 – 2007*

I first met Mike and his wife Penny in 1985 in the Great Hall in Frognal at the Junior Branch Prize-Giving, prior to our starting teaching at Holly Hill in the September. As is often the case with colleagues appointed at the same time, we became – and remained – close friends.

During his time at the JB, Mike was a sixth form tutor and teacher of Maths, interspersed with a little Junior Geography. He was also involved in several extramural activities: he initiated a philately club and took pupils to termly stamp exhibitions as well as organising early morning swimming sessions in the pool at the Senior School. Additionally, he arranged end-of-term trips to ten-pin bowling centres in North Harrow and Finchley, ice-skating in Hackney and assisted with day visits to Boulogne. He will be remembered, above all, for the popularity of the sports courses he organised for the boys at Spitalfields in the City of London. There, pupils could relax whilst enjoying racquet

sports: squash (Mike's favourite), badminton and tennis. All this exercise stood him in good stead for his taking part in the 1994 London Marathon where his arduous training sessions were rewarded with a commendably good time of around four hours. The whole school family supported him generously as he raised funds to buy two wheelchairs for a ward at the Middlesex Hospital where one of his sons was a patient.

After seven years, Mike transferred to the Senior School where he taught Maths to GCSE level and was a Middle School tutor. At Frognal, he also assumed responsibility for squash, frequently accompanying his protégés to the nearby Cumberland Club.

Mike was a very private, taciturn and rather shy man who did not make an overt display of emotion in either class or staffroom. Whilst to some this might have been perceived as being somewhat distant or reticent, nothing could be



further from the truth as regards his personality. In fact, he had a very dry sense of humour, which he displayed liberally to those with whom he felt at ease. Above all, Mike was a dedicated, caring professional in the best tradition of school mastering.

Our last ‘Hampstead’ meeting – shortly before he retired – was in Louis Hungarian Pâtisserie, just across the road from the JB. There, in our favourite haunt, we would often put the world to rights over a coffee and a warm, buttered croissant with just a dash of strawberry jam! On that occasion, too, he mused about how happy and proud he had been to have served the school he loved for 22 years.

We send our sincere condolences to his wife, Penny, and their children, Simon, Vicki and James.

From **David Quy** (Former Staff 1985 – 2004)

Paul Williams

1935 – 2023 / OG 1948 – 1954

Paul Williams was a man in the heroic mould. Tall, well-built, handsome, a fine sportsman, but the most modest and genuine of people.

Closest to Paul's heart were his stunningly beautiful wife, Vivian (from Argentina) and his five children, but also his many friends made over the years.

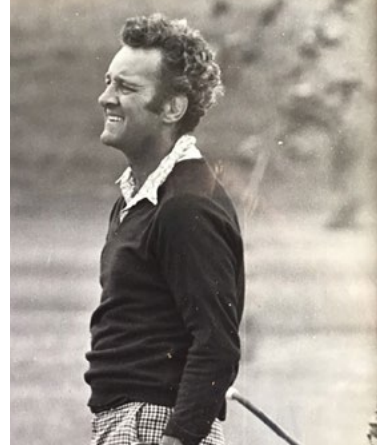
Paul attended UCS where he was Captain of Cricket and Captain of Deme. He also played First XV rugby, where the writer first met him.

After school, he followed his father, Hughie, into Williams Bros, the popular grocery store chain, and he did so for some time. Williams Bros was a very substantial business with over 100 branches at various times. It was founded generations before by the Williams family. Paul was known as Mr. Paul to the staff.

However, around the late 1960s/early 1970s, the Williams Bros chain was acquired by Budgens. What would Paul do now?

With his great schoolfriend, John Tripp, Paul then built and set up the brand-new Eastcote Squash Club. Squash was booming and players often had to wait months to join a club. Eastcote was a great success and became a centre for social events as well as tournaments.

After leaving school, Paul joined the UCS Old Boys' Rugby Team which was flourishing and putting out 8 sides every Saturday. The first XV had a strong fixture list, and several of the side, including Paul, represented Middlesex. Lifetime bonds of friendship were forged through rugby. The home ground was at Osterley, where many a libation was taken with the opponents on Saturday nights. One such night, when Paul drove his car home with the writer around



the North Circular Road, there was a request to walk a white line which Paul performed perfectly, much to the amazement of the traffic police!

Post rugby, Paul, along with other rugby players, joined the Old Boys' Golf Society where great fun (plus occasionally good golf) was had with Paul playing off a handicap of 8. There were 3 meetings a year plus an annual weekend away. These fixtures were always great fun.

Paul and Viv lived first in Windermere Avenue, Finchley, and then later in Arkley before buying "Parrotts", a beautiful 16th Century listed manor house in Croxley Green, where the family enjoyed many years and wonderful parties.

They had a holiday home in Salcombe where many joyous holidays were spent.

Viv and the children were central to Paul's life. They and all his many friends will recognise him as a man of unchanging integrity, honesty, and warmth, with a wry sense of humour.

My goodness – he will be missed!

From **Roger Lane** (OG 1951 – 1958)

Peter Ralph Wallis

BSc, (Eng), ACGI, FIEE, FIMA, C Eng.

1924 – 2022 / OG 1934 – 1942

Peter Wallis was a career scientist who did much to bring popular science to Hampstead, where he lived for 50 years. His father was headmaster of Willesden Grammar School and was keen that his own children would go to different schools, so University College School it was, a daily journey made by bicycle. Born to Mollie and Leonard in Barnet, with twin sister Helen who became a prominent academic geographer, Wallis excelled academically and left school in 1942 with top grades in Mathematics and Physics, at the height of the Second World War.

Rather than be called up into the forces, it was felt that he would better serve the country with his much-needed scientific abilities. He went to Imperial College where he graduated in 1944 after an accelerated course in Electrical Engineering with First Class Honours and medals in Mathematics and Electrical Engineering.

While studying and living at home he joined the Home Guard, a position he would point out to his family as equivalent to Private Pike in the much-loved TV series *Dad's Army*. Commended by his commanding officer as showing “great intelligence and a very good shot”, his duties involved night patrols and “splendid work under trying circumstances” attending the aftermath of bomb damage in North London.

After university Wallis joined the Royal Naval Scientific service and went on to work on radar and weapons guidance systems. He was promoted rapidly through various naval establishments in Portsmouth and Portland where he worked on anti-submarine warfare. He published many articles in defence journals on Radar and technical aspects of warfare, but also more general articles such as “The Way to the Stars” about the challenges of interstellar



travel. He even filed a patent on a 3D display system for radar that was well ahead of its time. In 1968, he returned to his native London for posts at the Ministry of Defence in Whitehall; ultimately as the very senior Controller of Air Weapons and Electronics before his retirement in 1984.

His job took him all over the world on visits to various defence establishments and suppliers. He had a lucky escape in 1968, when on an American nuclear submarine that suddenly rolled to 60 degrees and descended out of control towards its maximum depth. The crew managed to regain control, but that very same craft was lost at sea with all hands just a few months later, suspected to be the same fault.

Wallis had many other interests and took up skiing in the 1950's with trips almost every year until he was 80 years old. He was also an

enthusiastic ski tourer and became secretary of both Eagle and Alpine Ski Clubs. Other interests were amateur dramatics, gliding and hillwalking.

At home in London, Wallis was influential in the Flask Walk resident's association and for many years was secretary of the Hampstead Scientific Society. In this, he was a prolific organiser, speaker and contributor to the newsletter writing articles about wide ranging subjects to promote interest in popular science. For many years, the society met at his old school, UCS.

He married Frances in 1948 with whom he had 4 children and 13 grandchildren. After her death in 2011, when 87 years old he married Elisabeth who survives him.

From Charles Wallis

Deaths

Andres Cuenca-Torres

Old Gower

1985 – 1990

Ashley Price

Old Gower

1952 – 1958

Humphrey Taman Davies

Old Gower

1955 – 1965

Anthony Wakefield

Old Gower

1979 – 1986

Michael Hull

Old Gower

1944 – 1947

Peter Ralph Wallis

Old Gower

1934 – 1942

Mike Lewis

Former Staff

1985 – 2007

Jack Watson

Former Staff

1974 – 1998

Barry Peters

Old Gower

1946 – 1955

Paul Williams

Old Gower

1948 – 1954

Daniel Pittack

Old Gower

1988 – 1993

John Richard Wilson

Old Gower

1944 – 1949

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