

Sir Alan Traill

Music-loving insurance expert who as lord mayor of London delighted Margaret Thatcher by boosting Britain's overseas trade

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Sir Alan Traill with the Prince of Wales and Prince Harry at St Paul's Cathedral in 2002

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Margaret Thatcher perhaps paid Alan Traill the ultimate compliment. Speaking at the lord mayor's banquet at Guildhall in the City of London in November 1985, shortly after Traill had left that office, she congratulated him for his work in support of Britain's overseas trade, paraphrasing some lines of Kipling: "You have heard the beat of the offshore wind,/ And the thresh of the deep-sea rain;/ You have heard the song — how long? How long?/ Before the mayor's on the Traill again."

Traill, an insurance risk analysis consultant by profession, was an energetic lord mayor. He served from 1984 to 1985, flying the flag for the City, drumming up investment around the world, including from Indonesia and New Zealand, and attempting to build support for a British bid for the 1992 Olympic Games that eventually went to Barcelona. He had no less a sense of urgency in the boardroom, with many of his positions being music related, such as on the London Symphony Orchestra's education committee and at St Paul's Cathedral Choir School, where he was the driving force behind the creation of a

foundation to provide financial support for young choristers. At the Yehudi Menuhin School he played a key role in securing funding to make the swimming pool an all-weather resource and oversaw the completion of a fine new hall and a cycle of concerts to celebrate its opening.



Trill in earlier years

He continued to be a reassuring presence in the City, such as in 2002 when he accompanied the Prince of Wales and Prince Harry to a service of remembrance at St Paul's Cathedral on the anniversary of the 9/11 attacks.

Alan Towers Traill was born in Barnet, north London, in 1935, the youngest of three children of George, a Lloyd's insurance agent, and his wife, Margaret (née Matthews), who died when her son was young. The Traills hailed from Papa Westray, which is among the most northern of the Orkney Islands. Alan and his son visited on one brief occasion, "probably in recognition of the near destruction of the island's economy some generations earlier by a forebear", according to a friend.

He was educated at St Andrew's prep school, Eastbourne, and Charterhouse in Surrey before reading law at Jesus College, Cambridge, where he enjoyed rowing and building sets for the opera society, later putting this DIY experience to good use at home. He then joined his father in the insurance industry. He became an underwriting member of Lloyd's in 1963 and eventually helped to form the insurance company Lyon Traill Attenborough, where he became known as an expert witness, arbitrator and mediator.

In 1964 he married Sarah Hutt, a fashion model whom he had met at social events in London; their engagement was announced in *Tatler* and they left their wedding reception by helicopter. Sarah is an accomplished horsewoman and for their Lord Mayor's Show rode side-saddle on a grey police horse, thought to be the first time that a mayoress has taken part in that way. She survives him with their son, Philip, who followed his father into insurance before pursuing an independent career.

After Traill's year as lord mayor the family moved to the village of Thursley, near Godalming in Surrey. He was one of the original shareholders in the Three Horseshoes public house and could always be relied upon to give sound business advice, both to its managers and his fellow drinkers.

He delighted in teaching his two granddaughters to play chess and encouraging their musical studies. Although he claimed to play the piano, no one in the family could recall him ever sitting at the keyboard. He did, however, conduct the LSO for a charity concert in 1984, having first taken lessons in how to wield a baton in front of some of the country's most demanding orchestral players.

No less daunting was when he took to the stage on speech day at Christ's Hospital School, Horsham, to conduct the school orchestra. He was one of the school's longest-serving almoners, bringing expertise to its finance committee, as he did to many other schools, colleges and organisations. He retained his musical interests, helping both talented and disadvantaged children, and inviting many to perform at his home.

Sir Alan Traill, GBE, QSO, lord mayor of London, 1984-85, was born on May 7, 1935. He died of complications from Parkinson's disease on April 18, 2020, aged 84