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Sir Brian Jenkins obituary: lord mayor of London during bomb attack

Coopers accountant who as lord mayor showed remarkable defiance in the face of the Baltic Exchange IRA bombing



Jenkins was an energetic lord mayor of London in 1992

At 9.20pm on Friday April 10, 1992, the City of London was rocked by a huge IRA bomb detonated outside the Baltic Exchange, the shipping market in St Mary Axe, killing three people and injuring more than 90. Still in black tie, Sir Brian Jenkins, the lord mayor of London, rushed to the scene from a dinner with the Worshipful Company of Blacksmiths and said: “This great city will be up and running as usual on Monday morning.” He co-ordinated rescue operations with the police and installed free telephones in a marquee outside Guildhall for the 5,000 displaced workers.

He would display the same energy and pragmatism to secure the best deal possible for the Square Mile in the upcoming European single market — he wanted the European central bank located in London, but could not match Germany’s muscle in lobbying for Frankfurt — and in his early interest in computers. Jenkins realised their potential for his

employer, the accountant Coopers & Lybrand (now PricewaterhouseCoopers) as well as the Corporation of London, the City's local authority, and in 1978 he wrote what would become a standard textbook, *An Audit Approach to Computers*. It was translated into five languages but Jenkins had no illusions about its literary merit, jokingly recommending it for insomniacs.

He also broke new ground as a senior partner of Coopers, taking a more aggressive approach to marketing in what had been a cosy consensus among the big accountants, and launching a £1 million advertising campaign for Coopers' auditing services. "We were not getting our fair share of the work," he said.

Brian Garton Jenkins was born in 1935 in Beckenham, then in Kent and now part of Greater London. He was the son of Owen Garton Jenkins, a wholesale florist, and Doris (née Webber). Brian had a brother, Martin, who was six years younger and ran a classical music record shop near Brighton's Lanes. He died in 2023. During the Second World War, Brian remembered sheltering under the stairs with his mother and grandmother and, after the war, being taught how to peel and eat a banana.

He was educated at Tonbridge School, where he was a scholar and leaving exhibitioner, and won a state scholarship to Trinity College, Oxford. Between school and university he did National Service as a Royal Artillery second lieutenant in Gibraltar. A keen schoolboy actor, he failed to persuade his godfather, a London theatre producer, to help him into acting. So, on the advice of his then girlfriend's father, he joined Cooper Brothers in 1960, qualifying as a chartered accountant after three years.

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At a party in a London basement flat in 1964, Jenkins met Ann Prentice, daughter of JPM Prentice, a distinguished amateur astronomer who in 1934 discovered the nova star Herculis while sitting in a deckchair overnight in a remote Suffolk garden. Ann was a non-executive director of NHS trusts in southeast London, a governor of St Saviour's & St Olave's school in Southwark and chairman of the Ranyard Memorial Charitable Trust, which provides nursing and residential care in the London borough of Lewisham.

They married in 1967 and had two children. Julia is a consultant anaesthetist at Ipswich Hospital, Suffolk, and Charles is global head of human relations for the asset management arm of Pictet, a Swiss private banking and financial services group. Julia said: “Family holidays were generally spent at our Suffolk home with Dad on garden construction — building walls, laying York paving or cobblestones and listening to *Test Match Special* on the wireless. There was usually a 3,000-piece jigsaw puzzle on the go on the kitchen table.”

Jenkins, a partner at Coopers from 1969 to 1995, was chairman of the London Society of Chartered Accountants, and president of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales, and the British Computer Society. In 1995 he became chairman of Woolwich building society, leading its conversion into a public company and listing on the stock market in 1997. After only three years it was taken over by Barclays bank, where Jenkins was deputy chairman until 2004.

Between 1987 and 1988 he was a sheriff of London and, as well as being master of three livery companies, the Chartered Accountants, Merchant Taylors and Information Technologists, he was closely involved with three charities: Community Service Volunteers, the Order of St John and St John Ambulance and the Charities Aid Foundation (CAF). As CAF chairman he launched the Charity Bank, taking the first ceremonial deposit from Gordon Brown, the chancellor. In 1991 he was appointed Knight Grand Cross.

Stocky, and with a helmet of white hair, Jenkins had a 4,000-volume library comprised of detective fiction, humour and London, and a formidable collection of cigarette cards and London tram and bus tickets. When he started working in the City, stiff detached collars were still compulsory, but he had a trick to make them last longer. “As articulated clerks,” he said, “we used to buy paper collars at Woolworths in Cheapside and turn them inside out to wear on day two.”

Sir Brian Jenkins GBE, accountant and lord mayor of London, was born on December 3, 1935. He died on November 25, 2024, aged 88