

## Obituary for Geoffrey Pimm

Geoffrey Leonard Pimm was appointed as a Registrar in Bankruptcy of the High Court in 1981 after a varied and exotic legal career.

Born in 1926, Pimm became a Bevan boy after leaving school, working in the mines in Nottinghamshire, but was later commissioned into the Royal Navy, serving in the so-called “wavy navy” - the RNVR - during the war. When he left the navy he crammed for the bar examinations, and following pupillage was called to the bar (Gray’s Inn) on 5 February 1952. Pimm became a tenant in Edward Clarke’s chambers before joining the Colonial Service as a magistrate and being posted to Southern Rhodesia in June 1958. He went on to serve as a district magistrate in Zambia until independence in 1964. He then went into private practice in Zambia, working as a solicitor from 1964 until 1969 when he divorced and re-married, leaving Africa and losing touch with his family for a while.

Between 1970 and 1972 he served as attorney general in the Gilbert and Ellice Islands which remained colonies of the crown until 1972. Pimm advised the government of these islands on various matters, but considered one of his great achievements to be the settlement of a claim by the Gilbert islanders for several millions of pounds in compensation for phosphate mining and environmental damage to the islands. He accomplished this in part through his personal connections: he considered politics to be as important as the legal side of his work.

He then served in the attorney general’s chambers in Bermuda until 1974 after which he returned to London, working for Kleinwort Benson as a specialist legal advisor, a post in which he was able to put to good use his knowledge of the Bermuda offshore insurance business.

After leaving Kleinwort Benson, he joined the High Court as a bankruptcy registrar eventually serving as chief registrar until his retirement in 1997.

He had a penchant for Jaguar cars with leather seats, although he walked to the Royal Courts of Justice every day from his flat in Gray’s Inn. He also enjoyed flying: he held a private pilot’s licence in Zambia and for a time part-owned a Cessna aeroplane. He was also happy on his own sailing a dinghy, and later while in London, loved to visit the Opera.

A private man who revealed little to his colleagues, Pimm declined the offer of a valediction when he retired, an occasion that was marked only by an informal presentation by his colleagues and court staff. He went off quietly to spend his retirement in Port Elizabeth in South Africa where his second wife, Alvina, wished to live. She died shortly before him, after which he moved to a retirement complex run by the Catholic Church in Port Elizabeth. He loved all things traditional and once asked his local priest if he would say a red mass – traditionally held to mark the opening of the legal year. His priest had no idea what he meant.

He died on 25th November 2015 in Port Elizabeth, and is survived by his children, Sarah, Jonathan, James and Mary, and his first wife, Beryl.