

**Brian was born into a family of artisans and entrepreneurs.** His paternal grandfather Benjamin, set up a world-wide building business, establishing companies in Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the UK. Not only was his grandfather a skilled and highly qualified cabinetmaker, architect, builder, plumber and carpenter, but he was also a brilliant sculptor: he won first prize in the 1903 Great Exhibition for a beautifully carved bureau, which is still in Brian's proud possession. The Second World War left the family solely with the UK side of the business. Following Benjamin's death, Brian's father, Eric, continued in the business. He too, was as soundly qualified in every trade as was his father before him, except in sculpture. When all the houses were built, he continued to run the estate.

Both Brian and his brother, Clive, passed their Common Entrance examinations to Framlingham. Brian was always considered the dreamer of the family: a boy who, in his parents' view could never get to grips with reality. In fact, as Brian now firmly states, "thank God for dreamers because it's the dreamers of this world who are the most likely to make a difference to it." He has never forgotten one of Sir Winston Churchill's remarks when asked what frightened him most as an amateur painter.



CURRENT PRESIDENT BRIAN SMITH AND WIFE VALERIE (LEFT) WITH OUTGOING PRESIDENT ANDREW WRIGHT AND WIFE MARGARET AT THE 2007 ANNUAL DINNER

Sir Winston emphatically stated: "A blank canvas. It looks so pristine, why spoil it? Then you make your first mark and you have to make something of it!" Brian's business life has been that of dabbing splodges of paint on blank canvasses to see where it might lead!

Brian joined Stradbroke House in 1953, where he became best known for his photographic exploits, swimming, shooting and a passion for Suffolk church architecture. The latter two interests have remained with him. Whilst at Framlingham, he was appointed "official

photographer" to the Corps as well as covering other occasions. With respect to swimming, he remembers, only too well, achieving House Standards in freezing cold water in a slimy open air pool. Swimming for his Bronze Medal Lifesaving Award, he well recalls having to grope for a brick submerged in the green murk of the deep-end! Since then, Brian has saved three lives at sea.

His Rugby experience was short-lived. Having scored a glorious house "try" by diving spectacularly into sloshy mud, a whistle blew, disallowing it. It put him off Rugby for life. Shooting was another matter. He continued with it through National Service and beyond. Brian was Hon Sec of the OFRC for nearly 10 years.

On leaving school, Brian worked in S H Benson Ltd, then one of the largest advertising agencies in the country. He was then called up for National Service and posted to the Royal Corps of Signals' cipher division (cracking codes à la Bletchley Park), and working hand in hand with the Intelligence Corps, at the Langeleben listening station, close to the Russian border.

After leaving the Army, and following a number of years in the advertising business, he stared a blank canvas in the face for the first time in his business career. He started a London marketing and advertising agency, Mills, Smith & Partners, during which time, in the early 1980s, he and his colleague, Sir Keith Mills, were instrumental in the invention and launch of the Air Miles concept. This was yet another blank canvas needing colourful brush strokes to bring it to life.

The development of the Air Miles idea considerably challenged the resources of Mills, Smith & Partners. Fortunately, NatWest thought the idea a world-beater, and his company was able to run up a vast overdraft during its development. Following the presentation of the idea to various airlines, most of which were interested, but all of which sought to run the scheme in their own different ways, his company pitched the concept to Lord King, then Chairman of British Airways. The rest is history.

Another blank canvas and fresh blob of paint resulted in the foundation of the History of Advertising Trust (now in Raveningham, Norfolk) on whose board he still sits as a governor. The Trust houses the largest professionally run archive of marketing, promotional and advertising material in the world.

Brian now runs two companies: Escalator Marketing which specialises in strategic marketing, planning and assists small to medium-sized companies in developing their marketing platform, and The Umbrella Partnership, comprising 9 Berkshire-based companies in membership, each of which is fully capable of offering the highest levels of individual specialist marketing expertise.

In January, Brian was awarded a Fellowship of the Chartered Institute of Marketing.