



Gillam, left, helped to provide gravitas and credibility, as well as advice, at Asda alongside Archie Norman, who was made chief executive of the grocery chain

medicine had a positive impact on the share price, he had to fend off constant threats of takeover by either Barclays or Asda, which were seeking to buy up the share price was depressed. He also maintained boardroom discipline by ousting two chief executives, Malcolm Williamson and Rana Talwar. Although Gillam got on personally with Williamson, he had to have after an ill-judged lunch with Martin Taylor, his Barclays opposite number, became public knowledge, selling merger speculation. Talwar, Williamson's successor, left in 2001 because he was unwilling to tone down

### The Foreign Office was too snobby, so to see the world Gillam joined BP

in overbearing management style. Gillam fired him on realising that Talwar's behaviour was in danger of costing the bank some of its most talented executives. Talwar went on to found Sabre Capital Worldwide, a private equity fund, and died in January 2024. He had better luck with his third choice, Mervyn Davies, whose ability enabled Gillam to fend off demands for his own departure until his 70th birthday in 2003. He applied a similar technique at RSA, which had been misfiring after being formed in a 1996 merger. He

Robert Mendelsohn. But he suffered the chop after Gillam decided he was not achieving results quickly enough. Nevertheless, RSA continued to deteriorate under pressure from asbestos claims, pensions and endowment policy misselling allegations, and the restrictions arising from inadequate reserves. RSA became known as the "Rapidly Shrinking Assurance". Despite Gillam hiring the aptly named Andy Haste, he faced calls for his own resignation. But he managed to stay until his planned retirement in 2003, the same day he left Standard Chartered.

Lord Simon of Highbury, who worked for him at BP and remained a lifelong friend, said: "Patrick was highly intelligent, primarily an analytical numbers man who only after that got to know a person. He could come across as austere because he was very focused in conversation, particularly about business. But once you got to know him, he was very open and trusting." Patrick John Gillam was born in Putney, southwest London, in 1933, the only child of Cyril Gillam, a printing typesetter, and Mary (née Davis), a housewife. He grew up in a two-bedroom, ground-floor flat where the kitchen doubled as the bathroom. Cyril was posted to Italy during the Second World War and Patrick was evacuated but became homesick and returned to Putney. He and his mother were given a sharp reminder of the war when a V1 flying bomb killed 36 people in nearby



much-needed vegetables in the family's allotment and did his share of household repairs. While local schools were closed he was taught by a nun. As Patrick's family were observant Catholics, he attended Clapham College, a Roman Catholic grammar school in south London founded by the Xaverian Brothers, which closed in 1989. He applied for a place at the University of Cambridge but felt it was "too snobby", so instead he read history at the London School of Economics (LSE). He was the school's first XI goalkeeper, playing in the 1953 Surrey senior cup final. Gillam was called for National Service in 1954, and served as a second lieutenant in the Royal Artillery in Korea and aide-de-camp to a general after the British Army there had been reduced to a post-war brigade. Korea had given him the taste for the wider world, so he joined the Foreign Office, but was unhappy in the public school atmosphere. So after a year he moved to the more meritocratic but, crucially, globally widespread BP, where he spent the next 24 years managing businesses around the world.

of BP North America at the time, then leading the group's shipping, coal, trading, supply, exploration, nutrition and minerals operations mainly in the US, Africa and Australasia. But in the late 1980s he realised others had moved decisively ahead of him in the race for the top job at BP, so he got in touch with Mann. In 1988 he joined the Standard Chartered board. He left BP three years later, becoming chairman of Booker Tate, an agribusiness and sugar consultancy, and meanwhile moved up to be Standard Chartered's deputy chairman. Months later, Mann turned to him to fill the Asda job.

From 1989 to 1998 Gillam chaired the UK branch of the International Chamber of Commerce. He was a member of the appeal committee for Queen Elizabeth's Foundation for the Disabled and a trustee of the foundation's development trust, and he was on the redevelopment appeal committee of the Imperial War Museum. For more than 40 years he was on the LSE Court of Governors, establishing an annual lecture and a professorship of international and comparative politics in his name there. He was a fellow of the Institute of Directors and a freeman of the City of London, and in 1998 was knighted for services to industry.

Gillam and his wife travelled widely, often meeting international financial and political figures. He followed Arsenal FC and enjoyed gardening and skiing, as well as fine and decorative art. He was inspired by the art of places he visited on business, notably the Middle East, southeast Asia, India and China, such as Indian miniature paintings, and textiles. These interests led him to chair Asia House, which promotes Asian art as well as trading and political relations with the West. He also belonged to the Cook Society, which fosters relations between the UK and Australia. Although he sometimes had a rather stern manner, he could be surprisingly self-deprecating. Despite his modest upbringing, and being educated at a south London grammar school, newspapers frequently described him as patrician. When a shareholder accused him of being imperious, he joked: "Patrician is a word that you could also use."

Sir Patrick Gillam, businessman, was born on April 15, 1933. He died on September 29, 2025, aged 92