



BEAULIEU HISTORY SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

No. 38 May 2020

Editor's Column

Plans for the Coronavirus Crisis

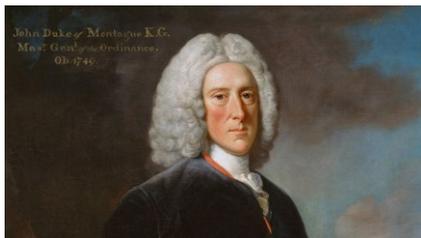
Because of the coronavirus lockdown there have been no meetings since the last newsletter and none can be planned until the lockdown is lifted and it is safe to meet.

The society plans the following during the lockdown for the benefit of members:

- To increase the frequency of newsletters,
- Where possible, in place of meetings, to make presentations online over the internet—see for example below under Forthcoming Presentations,
- To make recommendations of books on historic subjects for members to read—see the article on page 3,
- Similarly, to make recommendations of video and audio available, hopefully without charge, from internet websites—see the films on page 4,
- To continue to make members aware of the information they can access on the society's website—see section on this page.

Forthcoming Presentations

A talk is planned for later this summer entitled **The Myth, John Montagu's Adventure and the building of Buckler's Hard** to be given by Ken Robinson. It was to be held at Buckler's Hard, but if coronavirus lockdown has not been lifted it will be given online.



John Montagu, 2nd Duke of Montagu
1688-1749

The talk planned for April this year on the **Schneider Air Trophy Races** had to be cancelled. In the 1930s these races took place at Calshot on the New Forest coast. The presenter



Colin van Geffen is not able to give the talk online so the meeting to hear it will be rearranged, hopefully towards the end of this year.

The History Society Website

The website of the society www.beaulieuhistorysociety.org.uk contains a wealth of information about Beaulieu and the surrounding area in its Archive.

Access to the website is unrestricted for events and general information. But for the Archive section, you need to click on Member Login at the bottom of the Home page and enter a username and password. If you do not have them, they are available to members by email to membership secretary Dene McCulloch whose details are at the bottom of the back page.

After login, the Archive menu selection appears. Popular sections under Archive are Newsletters, Presentations and Meeting Talks. And do make use of the Search facility if you need it.

John Pemberton

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Dates for your Diary

Meetings cannot be scheduled because of the lockdown but the following events are planned:

Date to be advised
The Myth, John Montagu's Adventure and the building of Buckler's Hard
presented online
by Ken Robinson

Postponed to date later in 2020
Schneider Air Trophy Races
presented by Colin van Geffen
at Beaulieu Village Hall

Subscriptions

Membership fees of £5 per member were due at the start of the calendar year. If you have not yet paid, you are encouraged to make an electronic bank transfer to Beaulieu History Society, sort code 20-53-53, account number 90157031. In the Reference box, please put your surname and what is being paid (membership, book, name of event), otherwise we may not know what the payment is for.

The Property of a Beaulieu Priest

Anthony Norris engages in exhaustive research into a family inheritance.

Local people may remember that the Rev. Robert Frazer Powles was the priest at the Abbey Church from 1886 until 1939. He came to Beaulieu as Curate to the Rev. George Stenning in 1880 and when he moved to Alton, the Rev. Powles became vicar. He retired in 1939 and died in 1942 aged 94.

I am in possession of some items which were owned by Rev. Powles and am interested in determining how they came into the Norris family and whether I am the legal owner, and if not, who is.

The most valuable item is probably Rev. Powles' christening mug. It is solid silver and although not in-



scribed, is hall-marked 1846, Rev. Powles was born in 1848. Also a serviette ring, silver (I think – no hall-mark) inscribed RFP.



I have his staff which is wooden with, at one end, a silver cover inscribed RFP. This he probably used in his later years.

Also there is a painting (above right) of the north front of the Abbey Church by Sir David Muirhead Bone (1876-1953) dated 1920. I believe he was a friend of Robert Powles. On the reverse is, written in Powles' hand, 'Presented to R Plascott by an admirer of his many virtues.'



My first task was to gain access to Robert Powles' will and this will provided me with the link to my family. My grandmother, Annie Taylor, came to Beaulieu in 1911 to be Village Nurse. On December 27th 1915 she married Fred Norris who ran a saddler's business in the High Street. Her half-sister, Lillian Bunkall was a frequent visitor and became acquainted with Robert Plascott, the only son of James and Fanny Plascott who were the housekeepers of Rev. Powles.

They married and moved to Southbourne. Robert suffered from poor health, died in 1947 aged 59 and was buried in a tomb next to that of Rev. Powles in the Beaulieu cemetery. Lillian Plascott then moved to Vancouver.

The photo (to the right) shows Rev. Powles and Robert Plascott at Curtle House where both families lived

Rev. Powles' will shows that his entire assets were left to the Plascott family. Lillian and Robert Plascott had no children and it was in Lillian's will that a number of items were given to the children of Annie Norris. So I think this provides sufficient evidence that the items listed and shown at the beginning are rightfully owned by the Norris family.

It is my desire that the silver christening mug should be returned to the Powles family.

Robert Frazer Powles had three brothers and a sister who were still living at the beginning of the Twentieth Century. They were Captain Thomas Yardley Powles (1846-1911), William Delisle Powles (1840-1919), Rev. George Le Blanc Powles (1845-1922), who incidentally, for a while was priest at Fawley, and Fanny Dugard Powles(1851-1924). I am, at present, trying to locate possible offspring of his brothers and sister.



The investigation continues but it may be necessary to wait until the 1921 census is published next year for further progress to be made.

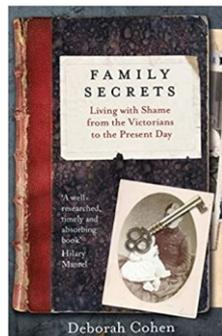
Anthony Norris

Reading Biographies

During the coronavirus crisis Christina Dykes has read a number of biographies.

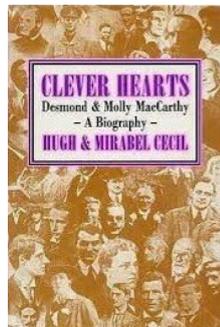
I have been studying writing biography for which reading is essential. There is the obvious factor of gathering information but there is the added matter of seeing how other authors coped with the tricky business of marrying history to the life of an individual. The lock-down has been perfect to read more books and I give here my thoughts on them.

Family Secret: Living with Shame from the Victorians to the Present Day by Deborah Cohen, is an interesting book on several levels. Starting from the late eighteenth century to the 1950s each chapter takes a secret that was regarded as shocking. Such topics as mixed race, illegitimate children, divorces, the bachelor uncle and attitudes to mental health are discussed.



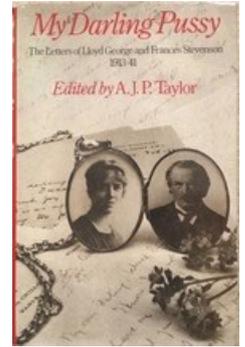
Each topic is based on true family stories, established by sourced research. Serious themes such as the balance between privacy and openness, shame and guilt, the power of the family unit, and why transparency is not necessarily the best way are tackled responsibly. It is an enjoyable read and flows well!

I was alerted to **Clever Hearts** by Hugh and Miranda Cecil by the obituary of Hugh Cecil who has recently died. It is a beautifully written book tracing the lives of Hugh's grandparents, Desmond and Molly McCarthy. Desmond became a distinguished literary and dramatic critic while Molly spent her time – sometimes not very willingly – supporting Desmond as he muddled and charmed his way through life.

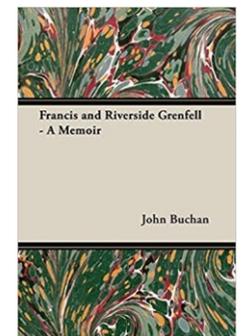


Both were associated with the Bloomsbury group and Desmond was a member of the Apostles at Cambridge where he mixed with some sparklers of a brilliant generation; but the main tale is how two people knitted into their age and circumstances. If you, like Desmond, have 'an incorrigible interest in other people and their relations to each other' (p.97) then this is a book for you.

I find letters (preferably unedited) a marvellous way of getting to grips with a character. **My Darling Pussy: The Letters of Lloyd George and Frances Stevenson 1913-1941**, edited by A.J. P. Taylor, did not disappoint. It is gossipy and historically instructive. The revelation for me was Frances who is revealed as politically ambitious and pushy. She needed to be a strong character to have maintained the charade about their relationship for so many years but it may be why the Welsh goat, Lloyd George, never made an honest woman of her until his wife died.

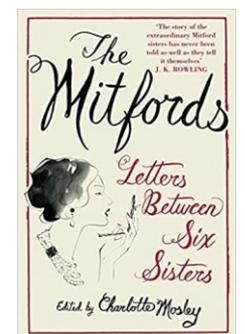


John Buchan's book, **Francis and Riversdale Grenfell: A Memoir**, is everything you would expect from a book about First World War heroes published in 1920. I read this book for two reasons. The Grenfell brothers were born within a year of my thesis subject, Bend'Or, 2nd Duke of Westminster, and they were his friends. They were also identical twins like my own sons. Both the Grenfells were brave and generally regarded as good chaps.



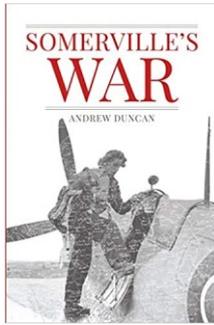
Francis won a Victoria Cross on 24 August 1914 for rescuing British guns from the Germans at Andregnies, Belgium, even though he was wounded. Rivy was equally known for his bravery. He was killed on 11 September 1914 during the first battle of the Aisne. Francis was killed on 25 May 1915. According to Buchan, and contemporaries, Francis never recovered from the death of his twin. It is a sorry story. Of course it is a very reverential book and as such would not pass the critical modern reader but the Grenfell twins deserve not to be forgotten.

Mitford letters are always a good read. I have been reading two in parallel – **The Mitfords: Letters Between Six Sisters**, edited by Charlotte Mosley and **Love from Nancy** also edited by Charlotte Mosley. The liveliness, originality and frankness of the sisters speak from every page. What adds to the letters is their authenticity and they are a good source for deepening understanding of the fast moving twentieth century.



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Andrew Duncan lives locally and I came to his book **Somerville's War** with much anticipation. It is a romping good read. Andrew's passions for intrigue, the Beaulieu River and conversation combine to create a lively story set against a well-researched background of the Special Operations Executive (SOE) in Second World War Beaulieu. I fancy too there is homage being paid to Air Transport Auxiliary (ATA) women, of which his mother was one. Andrew has produced some very good descriptions and for those of us who know the area there is the added pleasure of spotting locations. For a first book this is good stuff and he should write another.



Christina Dykes

Reading List

Deborah Cohen, *Family Secrets: Living with Shame from the Victorians to the Present Day* (London: Viking, 2013)

Hugh and Mirabel Cecil, *Clever Hearts: Desmond & Molly MacCarthy - A Biography* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1990)

My Darling Pussy: The Letters of Lloyd George and Frances Stevenson, ed. by A.J.P. Taylor (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson: 1975)

John Buchan, *Francis and Riversdale Grenfell: A Memoir* (London: Thomas Nelson, 1920)

The Mitfords: Letters between Six Sisters, ed. by Charlotte Mosley (London: Fourth Estate, 2007); *Love from Nancy: Letters of Nancy Mitford*, ed. by Charlotte Mosley (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1993)

Andrew Duncan, *Somerville's War* (London: Vineyard, 2020)

The publisher of Andrew Duncan's *Somerville's War* has made copies available to local groups (including Beaulieu River Sailing Club) at a low promotional price, £5 instead of retail price £10.95, provided the author waives royalties and any publisher's profit goes to local charity. Email Andrew andrewduncan150@gmail.com on how to pay and collect copies.

New Forest Historic Films

Here is a film about the New Forest which is free to access on the internet and we think you will enjoy:



Forest Heritage

Hampshire casts its sylvan spell in this absorbing look at the tranquil villages and ancient traditions of the New Forest

18th century Agisters and pigs with rights to wander are just some of the ancient traditions celebrated in this beguiling look at life in the New Forest. Less familiar sights are captured, too, such as broom making and logging, forestry planting and sailing on the River Beaulieu near Buckler's Hard.

Documentary | 1952 | 23 mins | British Film Institute

Click on [Forest Heritage](#) or copy this web address into your browser:

<https://player.bfi.org.uk/free/film/watch-forest-heritage-1952-online>

Here is another which children in your home may enjoy:



Forest Pony

Short children's adventure about Bonny, a wild New Forest pony, and some dodgy horse thieves

Two children attempt to tame a wild New forest pony in this jolly kids' adventure. Geoffrey Keen leads the cast of this unusual short film from the Children's Film Foundation. Originally released in 1949 as *Riders of the New Forest*, a five part serial, this is the pacier revised version from 1972.

Children's | 1972 | 23 mins | British Film Institute

Click on [Forest Pony](#) or copy this web address into your browser:

<https://player.bfi.org.uk/free/film/watch-forest-pony-1972-online>

Plagues and Pandemics in History

Daniel Defoe's *A Journal of the Plague Year*, an account of the Great Plague of London in 1655 is a best seller today, 298 years after it was first published in 1722. It has been so popular that the latest Penguin Classics paperback edition has sold out.

Other books selling well have been *Pale Rider* by Laura Spinney, about the Spanish Flu pandemic in 1918, *The Plague* by Albert Camus, a novel about a plague which swept through the Algerian town of Oran, and *The Painted Veil* by W. Somerset Maugham, a very Maughamian novel, including passion, deceit and adultery set against the background of a cholera epidemic in China. It seems that in these uncertain times reading about a plague, epidemic or pandemic in history can be comforting and instructive.

Before writing this article I needed to enlighten myself about the meaning of plagues, pandemics and epidemics.

Plague is an infection which has broken out periodically in human history. Although the causes of the plague were not understood during the height of the visitations, the most generally held belief in recent times is that the plague was spread by infected fleas who were carried around the known world on the backs of rats who lived on sailing galleys. When an infected rodent dies after being bitten by its resident fleas, the fleas find a human host and infect them. The 'rat theory' has been supplanted recently by the idea that humans carried the infections amongst themselves in the fleas and ticks which infested most people in less hygienic times, although the fleas and ticks would also have to have been infected in the first place.

There are three types of plague. The bubonic is the one with which we are most familiar because of the outbreak of the Black Death in Europe and the Great Plague in London, both bubonic. Bubonic is so-called because of swellings on the body called buboes which

appear on lymph nodes or glands as the body's immune system is attacked. The bubonic strain is the only form from which some victims may recover. The other plagues, septicemic and pneumonic, are more deadly and sometimes travel with the bubonic.

A pandemic is a disease which has spread all over the world. The World Health Organisation declared Covid-19 a pandemic on March 11, 2020. An epidemic is an outbreak of infection or disease which has spread within one community, population or region, such as the Ebola virus in West Africa in 2014-2016.

The historians of classical Greece and Rome have left records of plague. Pericles, builder of classical Athens, died of the plague in 429 BC during the Peloponnesian War between Athens and Sparta. The history of ancient Rome includes many accounts of large numbers of deaths from plague, especially after the armies had been on campaigns to the east. Analysis of grave sites have led archaeologists to believe that these plagues were bubonic.

The last great plague in late antiquity was in the 6th Century during the time of the Emperor Justinian who ruled the Byzantine (Eastern Roman) empire from Constantinople. Also bubonic, the plague is believed to have been carried via trade routes from Central Asia to East Africa and from there, merchants and caravans carried it to Egypt, from where it was carried in galleys to Constantinople and Mediterranean ports in rat and flea-infested grain.

There are many reasons suggested for the outbreak of the Black Death in Europe in 1347. Philip Ziegler's excellent book, *The Black Death* first published in 1969, opens with an incident in Crimea in 1346 when a Tartar army picked a quarrel with Genoese merchant traders and having chased them into the Crimean port of Feodosia, catapulted several corpses of plague victims into the town. A new and alarming plague had recently

broken out in Western Asia, in Mongolia, Tibet and West China and had arrived amongst the Tartars.

The terrible idea of infecting the enemy with the plague was a not uncommon tactic of warfare. In this case the Genoese carried the rotting bodies through the town and dumped them in the sea, but by then the infection had spread. Ziegler writes: "the Genoese escaped to their galleys and fled towards the Mediterranean. With them travelled the Black Death. Within three years, every third man, woman and child in Europe was dead."



Detail from *The Triumph of Death* by Pieter Bruegel the Elder 1562

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It is likely that the incident described by Philip Ziegler was one of many which helped carry the plague to Europe. The problem with this infection was how quickly it spread. England was not isolated from Europe and once the plague arrived there it moved quickly, carried by merchant ships into English ports. Beaulieu Abbey kept a large store, known as the 'Wool House' in Southampton, where the wool produced by the granges was stored until it was bought by merchants, usually Italian. Alan Bartlett, writing about the latter days of Beaulieu Abbey in the first part of *Beaulieu in Tudor and Stuart Times*, mentions that in the 13th Century, "the Florentines had come to England to ride the country for wool". As the trade continued into the 14th Century the galleys no doubt brought the plague with them on flea-infested rats. Beaulieu Abbey and the surrounding villages were affected like all parts of England by the high death rate.

Monasticism in England did not recover from the loss of so many monks, nuns and lay brothers.

Other factors contributing to the spread of the Black Death are outlined in a podcast in Dan Snow's *History Hit* series. Dan talks to Professor Mark Bailey, High Master of St Paul's School, London and Professor of Later Medieval History at the University of East Anglia.

Professor Bailey is publishing a book about the Black Death and its aftermath later this year and among many very interesting discoveries he says that in Europe, the climate had changed noticeably in the years before the plague arrived. There were more storms, more extremes of weather such as very wet and very dry periods and two of the coldest snaps ever known in this millennium on two successive winters which led to crop failure and famine. Malnutrition and cold left people more vulnerable to the plague and 50% of the population of England died. Professor Bailey also mentions that the plague of 541-542 AD, during the time of Emperor Justinian took place during two exceptionally cold winters.

In England, the result of losing such a high proportion of the population in the middle of the 14th Century meant that by 1349, 40% of the land changed hands. There was a reduction in wealth inequality because of the shortage of labour and those who survived became more prosperous. People learned to work together in communities in order to cope with any recurrences of the plague which followed.

In Venice, the idea of isolating ships and their passengers and crew arriving from infected ports in the East led to the *quaranta giorni*, or 40 days of isolation (which became our word quarantine) on uninhabited islands nearby, the Lazaretto Viejo and Lazaretto Nuevo.

A gift to literature from this period is the *Decameron* by Boccaccio (1313-1375). The book is a collection of 100

stories told by a group of young people sheltering in a secluded villa outside Florence to escape the Black Death. It was written between 1348-1353 after the plague had passed. The stories range from the erotic to the tragic. Some are taken from classical stories, some inspired by Dante, some from the *One Thousand and One Nights*. The *Decameron* inspired Chaucer to write *The Canterbury Tales*, Shakespeare to write *All's Well That Ends Well* and Keats to write his poem *Isabella or The Pot of Basil*.

The plague returned five more times and the famous outbreak in 1665 was the last time it struck in England.

For the record of the Great Plague of London we have the marvellous account written by Daniel Defoe and the vivid descriptions in the diaries of Samuel Pepys.

Daniel Defoe was only five years old when the plague arrived in London and he based his book on the memories of his uncle, Henry Foe. The narrator, like Defoe's uncle, was a saddler with his own successful business in Aldgate, relying 'not by a shop or chance trade, but among the merchants trading to the English colonies in America'. Defoe published the book in the same year as *Moll Flanders* and a few years after *Robinson Crusoe*.

H.F., as the narrator is known, believed the plague arrived in London from the ports of Amsterdam and Rotterdam. As news of the plague first circulated, H.F., who lived just outside the city wall in the East End at Aldgate, wrote:

"as the distemper had not reached to that side of the city, our neighbourhood continued very easy. But at the other end of the town their consternation was very great: and the richer sort of people, especially the nobility and gentry from the west part of the city, thronged out of town with their families and servants in an unusual manner..."

This reaction brings to mind the estimated 250,000 people who, not surprisingly, left London ahead of the coronavirus lockdown (see Footnote). The majority of the people leaving London went to the east or south east, where presumably most had a country home, and some of them are perhaps members of the Beaulieu History Society reading this article!

The reason why the plague has not struck in London, or England since is because the year of the plague was followed by the Great Fire of London, which destroyed all the wooden terraced houses and narrow unsanitary streets. The city was rebuilt.

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Footnote

The evidence for the number of people leaving London was collected from smartphone apps by Cuebiq, a US based company specialising in analysing mobility data, and scrutinised by academics at Oxford University.

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Christopher Wren designed the majestic St Paul's Cathedral and with Robert Hooke, the brilliant Monument to the Great Fire in Pudding Lane. It is also likely that an immunity to plague had developed in the population.

Plague remains in very few countries and has been eradicated from most of the world. The name of the plague bacteria is *Yersinia Pestis*, or *Y. Pestis*, discovered in 1894 by Alexandre Yersin, a Swiss/French physician and bacteriologist from the Pasteur Institute in Paris, during an epidemic in Hong Kong.

The last great pandemic was the Spanish Flu which killed 50 million people worldwide. The flu did not originate in Spain but Spain was the first country in which it was identified in 1918. It arrived at the end of the First World War and in one year was responsible for more deaths than the number of people killed in the war. The flu first appeared among weakened soldiers and undernourished populations but was so infectious it rapidly circulated worldwide.



Victims of Spanish flu at Colorado Agricultural College, Fort Collins 1918

At the time, there were no effective drugs or vaccines to treat it. In the USA, which was hit particularly badly, citizens were ordered to wear masks, and schools, theatres and businesses were closed. Eventually the infection ran its course – people either died or built up an immunity to it.

In her recent book, *Pale Rider*, Laura Spinney, an American science journalist has carried out a full examination of the pandemic and makes the interesting observation that a study of a piece of preserved lung tissue from a victim has shown that the virus, called H1N1 was the same as a bird flu virus that was assumed could not be transmitted to humans. However, it was

transmitted, and the human immune system was unable to cope. A theory in the book is that the bird flu virus first infected pigs, which were then eaten by humans.

The transmission of diseases from animals to humans is called Zoonosis and is the preferred theory for the origins of Covid-19.

As this article is being prepared, journalists Sarah Newey and Anne Gulland write in the *Daily Telegraph* (19 May 2020):

“The source of the coronavirus is believed to in a ‘wet market’ in Wuhan in China where both dead and live animals are sold, including fish and birds. Such markets pose a heightened risk of viruses jumping from animals to humans because hygiene standards are difficult to maintain if live animals are being kept and butchered on site. Typically, they are also densely packed allowing disease to spread from species to species.

“The original source of Covid-19 has not yet been identified, but the original host is thought to be bats. Bats were not sold at the Wuhan market but may have infected live chickens or other animals sold there. Bats are host to a wide range of zoonotic viruses, including Ebola, HIV and rabies.”

Gillian Strathcarron

Reading List

Daniel Defoe, *A Journal of the Plague Year*, 1722 (Penguin Classics paperback out of print)

Laura Spinney, *Pale Rider*, 2017 (Vintage paperback)

Albert Camus, *The Plague*, 1947 (Penguin Classics paperback)

W. Somerset Maugham, *The Painted Veil*, 1925 (Penguin paperback)

Philip Ziegler, *The Black Death*, 1969 (Faber & Faber paperback)

Alan Bartlett, *Beaulieu in Tudor & Stuart Times*, 1973 (published by the Beaulieu History Society 2017)

Giovanni Boccaccio, *The Decameron*, 1353 (English editions published by Oxford World's Classics, Penguin Classics and others)

Podcast

Dan Snow with Mark Bailey, *History Hit – The Black Death*, online at <https://tv.historyhit.com/watch/36638368>

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