



BEAULIEU HISTORY SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

No. 40 November 2021

Editor's Column

Past Meetings

On 9th September 2021 we held our first meeting since the coronavirus lockdown. The subject was the **Art of Belinda, Lady Montagu**, viewing and celebrating her painting, drawing and needlework. The meeting was kindly hosted by her daughter Mary Montagu-Scott in Palace House and the Domus building at Beaulieu Abbey.

Mary gave a talk on her mother's embroideries hanging in the Domus. The text of the talk and images of the embroideries are reproduced in this newsletter.



Forthcoming Meetings

On 29 November 2021 there will be a talk by Colin van Geffen on the **Schneider Trophy Air Races**. They were run between 1913 and 1931 in various countries, twice over the Solent from the RAF seaplane station at Calshot on the New Forest coast.

A developer of the air race planes, Supermarine Aviation Works in Southampton, went on to develop the Spitfire WWII fighter aircraft.

An **Annual General Meeting and Talk** is planned for late January 2022. Date and subject of the talk to be announced.



Supermarine S.6B air racer which won the Calshot Schneider Trophy Air Race in 1931. Calshot Castle is in the background

John Pemberton

Contents

Belinda, Lady Montagu's Embroideries	2
New Forest Reference Library	5
Fish and Fishing at Beaulieu	6
Murder at Beaulieu	8

Dates for your Diary

Monday 29 November 2021 6:30pm
Schneider Trophy Air Races
presented by Colin van Geffen
Beaulieu Village Hall

Date in late January
to be announced
AGM and Talk
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.

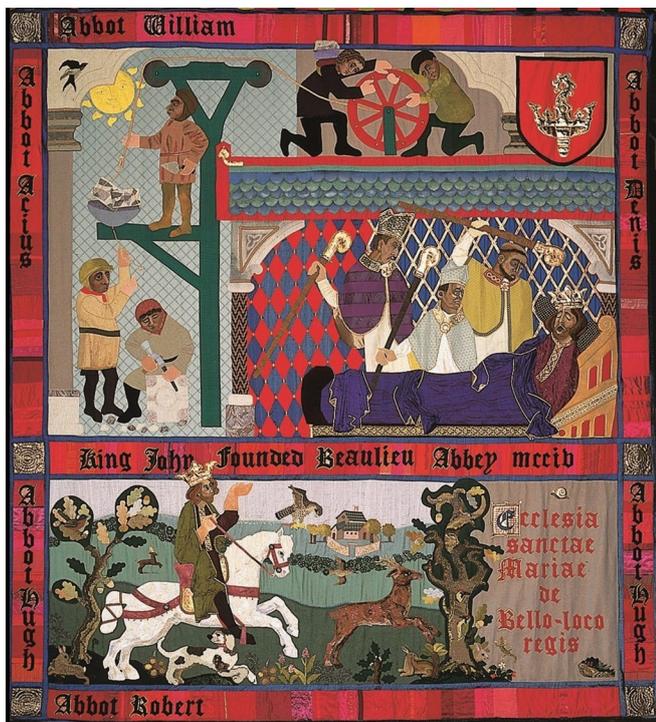
Belinda, Lady Montagu's embroideries

On 9 September 2021 at a society meeting on the Art of Belinda, Lady Montagu, her daughter Mary Montagu-Scott gave a talk on the embroideries hanging in the Domus building of Beaulieu Abbey which depict its history. This is the text of her talk.

This set of embroideries (they are not tapestries) were created by my mother between 1991 and 1996 and were commissioned by the late Lord Montagu for this location. She made around one a year but the first one is particularly large and involved the initial research and design phase for them all.

1. Foundation

King John is depicted hawking in The New Forest as he had a hunting lodge at Beaulieu prior to the Abbey being built. His hawk is flying at a snipe and the deer flee



from the king and his hounds. In the trees are some birds of the forest - a Dartford warbler, green woodpeckers, and nuthatch and a nightjar. Above is depicted the legend that King John had a nightmare and he dreams that he is being beaten by the Cistercian monks whom he had been oppressing. On awakening, still feeling the blows on his back, he decides to make reparation by giving the Cistercians the land to build an abbey - the only religious foundation of King John.

The workmen start building using a pulley to haul up the stones and other materials. In the top right hand corner is the abbey crest. Round the border are the names of the early Abbots: William, Denis, Robert, Hugh, Acius.

2. Dedication

Beaulieu Abbey was founded in 1204, when King John made a gift of land to the Cistercian monks. Its construction took many years and the abbey church was finally completed in 1246, 42 years after it was begun.

The hanging depicts the dedication ceremony, which took place on the 17th of June 1246, being conducted by the Bishop of Winchester in the presence of King John's son King Henry III, his wife Queen Eleanor and the Abbot of Beaulieu, Abbot Alcius de Gisors and the



bishops of Bath, Exeter and Chichester.

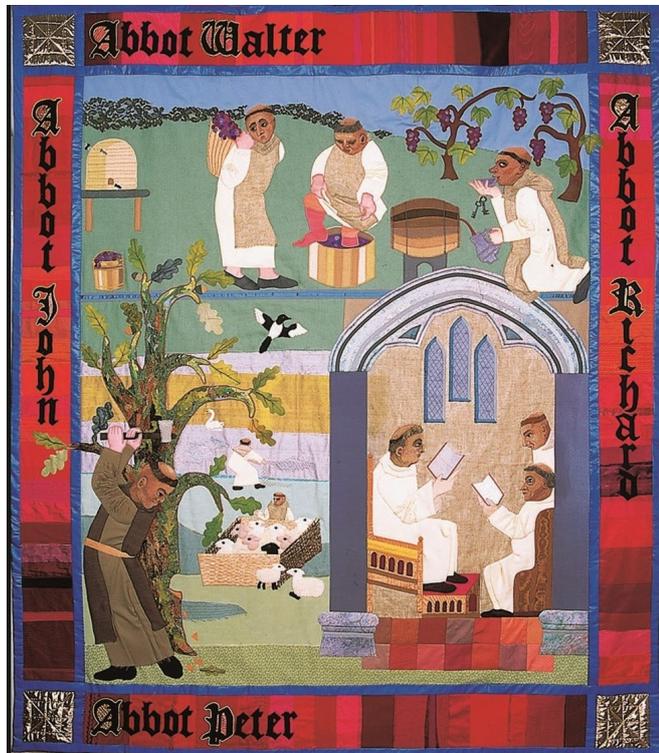
The young prince Edward was taken ill during his visit to Beaulieu and as a consequence his mother Queen Eleanor remained in the abbey for three weeks. Later the abbot was reprimanded for allowing a woman to stay within the confines of the abbey and the prior and the cellarer was dismissed as a result. This is depicted at the top, you see the young prince being spoon fed medicine and an angel serenading them.

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3. Monastic Life 1

The monks and lay brothers work together to ensure that the abbey was self-supporting.

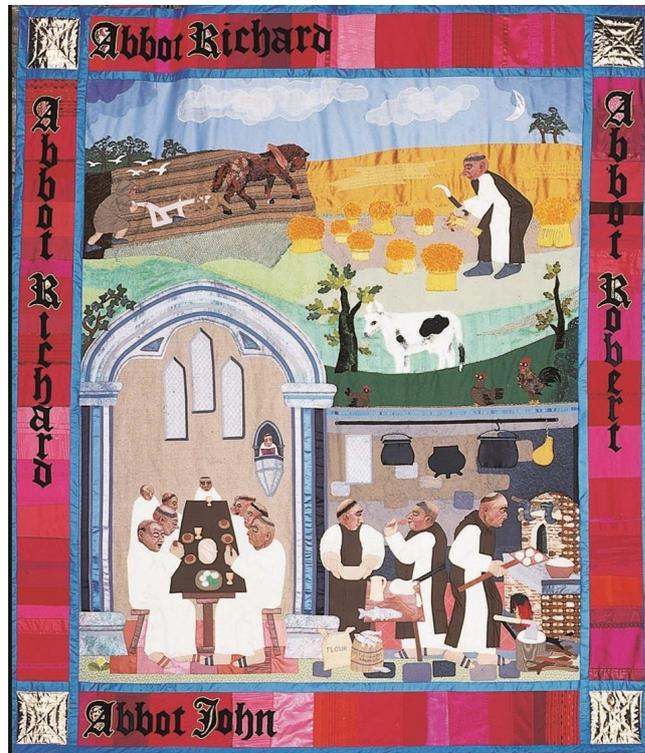


The monk on the left, still dressed in a brown habit, is shown cutting down a tree for firewood. Sheep are seen grazing, although the monks had to abstain from the flesh of four footed beasts. However special guests and the sick were served meat. Sheep provided wool for clothing and were the main source of abbey revenue. The wool was greatly prized for its high quality and exported to the continent for weaving in France and Belgium. Bees were kept for the production of honey, grapes were grown for wine, and fish and eels caught in the river were an important part of their diet. The abbey was also a seat of learning where reading and the copying of religious texts and illumination took place as shown lower down. I think the monk with the keys to the wine cellar at the top might have been overdoing the tasting a bit.

4. Monastic Life 2 - image above right

Here they are tilling the land, reaping their crops and practising animal husbandry. Food was prepared in the kitchen next to the refectory which now forms the Beaulieu Abbey church and the scene depicts a monk reading from the pulpit while others take a meal below. The monks ate in silence and had the Rule of St Benedict read to them or other bible texts while they ate. Fish from the river or the abbey stew pond was occasionally served to augment the otherwise meagre

diet. You can see the ploughing of the land, baking of bread and the sheaves of wheat being harvested.



5. Herbs in the Infirmary Garden

This smaller hanging depicts the variety of produce grown by the lay brothers at the abbey and its granges or farms: wild meadow herbs and flowers, blackberries, onions, leeks, garlic, peas and beans, apples and pears, grapes and bees. The monks used a lot of herbs



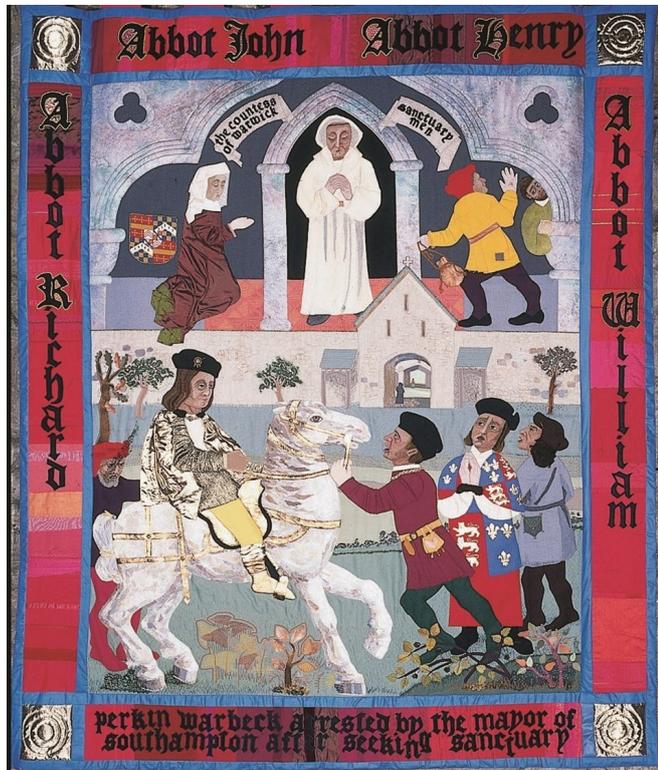
for medical health and many are grown here today in the Cloisters. 'Curtilagium' is a courtyard garden or piece of ground and you can see the monk chasing out a rabbit with his rake.

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6. Sanctuary

This hanging shows the abbey’s most famous sanctuary seeker, Perkin Warbeck. Beaulieu Abbey was the only place in southern England with a right of perma-



nent sanctuary. People who had committed a crime could remain out of reach of the law provided they stayed inside the abbey precinct walls. In 1497 Perkin Warbeck, the Yorkist pretender to the throne of Henry VII claimed to be Richard, Duke of York, the younger of the two princes in the tower, who had fled from Taunton to seek sanctuary in Beaulieu. Hoping for a pardon from the King, he left the abbey dressed all in gold and accompanied by a Herald, only to be arrested by the mayor of Southampton, John Gregory and taken to the Tower of London.

The Abbot stands above, whilst to his right kneels the Countess of Warwick who is said to have sought sanctuary in 1471 and remained at Beaulieu for 14 years until she regained her liberty and her title. A common felon with the letter A marking on his right hand can be seen to the Abbots left. The right of sanctuary was abolished when the abbey was closed in 1538. Those who had committed serious crimes like murder had to stand trial, but those whose crimes were considered less serious like debtors, we’re allowed to go free.

Beaulieu Village would have been made up of many such sanctuary seekers, who at the sound of the Kings men approaching would run and jump over the Abbey precinct walls where they were out of reach. No won-

der King Henry VIII wanted to get rid of the Abbeys and the communities of villains who lived beside them.

7. Dissolution

This hanging shows scenes from the closure of the abbey in 1538. This was part of Henry VIII dissolution of



the monasteries. The monks can be seen sadly leaving the abbey before some of its buildings were knocked down on Henry’s orders. He used stone and lead from Beaulieu Abbey to construct his castles at Hurst, Calshot and Cowes, seen above. Thomas Wriothesley, 1st Earl of Southampton (1505–50) is seen paying Henry VIII £1340.06 shillings and 8p to acquire the 8000 acre Beaulieu estate on the right.

Below a monk is shown throwing a statue of the Virgin Mary into Sowley Pond.

Legend suggests that the monks threw the statue from the niche on the front of the great Gatehouse now Palace House into the pond to prevent Henry VIII from taking it. Sowley Pond was drained in 1907 so that it could be restocked with fish and a search for the elusive statue, but no such treasure was found. Maybe it is still there buried deep in the mud!

My mother applied her exceptional talent and devoted endless hours to create these embroideries reflecting her love and knowledge of Beaulieu and its history.

I hope that they will remain here for many future generations to enjoy.

Mary Montagu-Scott

The New Forest Reference Library

For those undertaking historic research or just having an interest in the New Forest, the Christopher Tower Reference Library at the New Forest Heritage Centre in Lyndhurst car park has considerably expanded its resources in recent years.



New Forest Knowledge Website

A major development has been the addition of this website www.nfknowledge.org. Its aims were to offer online access to the Heritage Centre’s Museum and Library catalogues and digital collections, an indexed link to a range of other websites containing information about the New Forest ranging from the Imperial War Museum to British Pathe newsreels, and to create a community upload facility for members of the public to contribute their own photographs, memories, and research.

A short video illustrating the new facilities of the Library is available by searching YouTube for: New Forest Heritage Project

A team of 20 Library volunteers has photographed and scanned 20,000 library items, contributing a total of around 2,000 days to the cause. Over 1,000 articles have been contributed to the website by the public and local history groups.

The website has grown in success. It was particularly appreciated during Coronavirus lockdown with almost 30,000 website hits in one month, up 600% on the previous year.

Library Collections

The main catalogue contains over 12,500 books about all aspects of the New Forest on the Library’s open shelves. The Library’s Special Collection of around



1,200 unique or extremely rare books, many of which are leather bound with hand annotations are stored in temperature-controlled conditions, accessible only to readers upon request.

The map collection comprises over 6,500 maps covering the New Forest area, many of which have unique annotations. The photographic library contains in the region of 10,000 prints and a similar number of glass plate negatives and 35mm slides. The Library has a collection of microfiche for baptisms, marriages and burials, and a range of other media including CDs, DVDs, VHS, and cassette tapes.

Library Redevelopment

There had been an increasing awareness that the Library was running out of storage space, so a decision was taken to install archive roller racking, more than quadrupling the previous amount of shelf space. As part of this process, all previously uncatalogued reports were catalogued and added to the new shelves.



A recent visitor commented: “... what I did see is the amount of work that has gone on in the reference library. I’ve seen pictures posted on Facebook and but what impressed me the most was the library catalogue search capabilities. I’ll spend hours doing that before I return whenever that is possible again. I know you have been more than instrumental in the overhaul and do congratulate you and your staff. Take care, stay safe and I hope to visit soon.” Cal Smith, Canada

The Café

The Heritage Centre has a new café allowing visitors to relax and sample its range of food and drinks.

Visiting the Library

The Heritage Centre seeks to put the community at the heart of everything it does. Groups are welcomed to the Library from local history societies and sessions delivered for local universities and colleges. School educational visits, postponed during coronavirus crisis, are to restart.

Walk-in public access to the Library is currently on Wednesdays 10am-4pm and Fridays 10am-12:30pm, but plans are afoot to extend the days. Outside these times the Library can be accessed by appointment - email library@newforestheritage.org.uk or telephone 023 8028 6150.

John Pemberton

Abridged from a report by Centre Manager Kath Walker

Fish and Fishing through the Centuries at Beaulieu

Any estate situated as Beaulieu is, where a tidal river meets the sea, will undoubtedly have used the rich resources both habitats have to offer. Similarly, the well-watered hinterlands offer further opportunities for fish related enterprises; it is these that are considered in the following article from historian Richard Reeves.

Prior to the foundation of Beaulieu Abbey, in 1205, records are silent on the subject, however, the copious records of Abbey provide much detail as to how the Cistercians managed their fisheries. By 1270 the monks had constructed a large dam at Sowley, thereby forming the pond there, the main use of which was to breed fish. The species stocked at that time would certainly have included bream and may also have included pike, perch, roach, rudd and chub – carp had not yet been introduced to England. From this pond, fish would have been netted and transferred to 'stew' ponds near the Abbey where they could be more easily caught when required. The Abbey's medieval stew pond still exists near the church car park at Beaulieu; by the 16th century it was called 'le Paile Pond'. Ponds associated with the Abbey fulling mill, likely doubled up as stew ponds, being not far from the Abbey.

Freshwater fish were highly prized delicacies at the time and not commonly eaten by the lower ranks, certain species such as pike, then known as lupi aquatica or 'water wolves' often being of particularly high status. Generally the monks ate sea fish, mainly herring, caught in large numbers by fishermen on the Abbey Estate at Northtown in Norfolk, and shipped to Beaulieu. Of course, netting the Beaulieu River would easily provide a certain quantity of bass, mullet and trout, and it is possible some sea fishing was undertaken locally. It is also likely that the mill would contain eel traps in the race. Eels were regularly taken in large numbers and were therefore considered as lower status despite being taken in freshwater.

Surviving records from the time of the Dissolution of the Abbey, 1538, show how things had moved on, though fish were still considered a high status gift. In 1535, the Abbot sent a pike to Thomas Cromwell no doubt to curry favour and obtain a favourable surrender of the Abbey lands. Most of the estate was now let to tenants and the terms of their respective leases generally record ponds indicating their continued value. Before the Dissolution, Sowley Pond was subject to a right of the tenant of Lodge Farm and Ginns to fish there with a net one day and one night a week. After the Dissolution, that right was reserved to the lord, Thomas Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton, though the reference to nets was dropped and a Fish Howse is noted, perhaps indicating recreational angling in addition to the taking of fish for the Lord's use. Angling was then in its infancy and popular amongst the land-

ed classes; the earliest English essay on the subject was contained in the 1496 edition of the *Boke of St. Albans*, entitled a *Treatyse of Fysshynge wyth an Angle*.

As well as Beaulieu, the Earl of Southampton also had Titchfield at the Dissolution and orders were soon made to supply 1400 live bream, pike, tench and perch from Sowley Pond to stock the ponds at Titchfield. The value of Sowley Pond in this regard

was noted by John Craiford in a letter to the Earl, dated the 12th April 1538, in which he says: 'Fail not to purchase Southlee pond, the storer and foundation of your stews at Leonard's and Titchfelde ...' The Earl was soon to stock his ponds at Titchfield with carp supplied by the Bailiff of Guernsey and no doubt the ponds at Beaulieu derived its own stock from that introduction soon after.

Records relating to fish during the next 300 years are rather sparse. Some smaller ponds were drained and, in the early 18th century, Boarmans Pond was deprived of part of its inflow when the Hartford Stream was diverted to provide headwater for an ornamental cascade and canal. By 1867 Boarmans had also been drained. However, by May the following year the pond had been restored. There were then no fish in the pond and the keepers had been instructed not to place pike in it. This was fortunate as the pond did not last long.



Frontispiece for the 'Treatyse of Fysshynge wyth an Angle' from the *Boke of St. Albans*



1802 Plan of the environs of Palace House showing the medieval stew pond with the later 18th century pond above and connected to it

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Ordnance Survey maps of 1895 and 1907 show only marshy ground. Finally, the map of 1931 shows the pond restored, perhaps by the Royal Engineers who frequently encamped in the nearby parkland during the interwar years and provides an explanation for the dam being known as Engineers Bank. Soon after the restoration Colonel George Pollitt, tenant of The House in the Wood, leased the fishing there for £10 a year, and in 1934, letters confirm that the pond was then well stocked with trout. From that date the pond appears to have been maintained and stocked for fishing, though, since 1972, it has been managed as a course fishery by the local angling club.

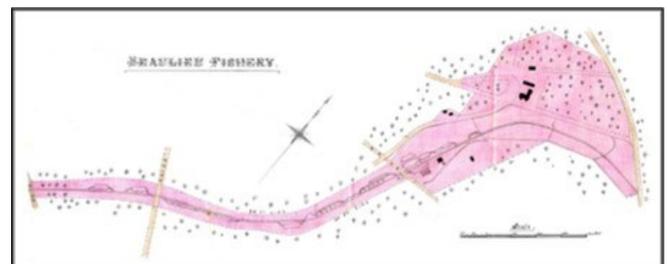
In 1884, an oyster fishery on the Beaulieu River, which had formed part of the large Newtown (Isle of Wight) Fisheries, came into the hands of Lord Montagu on the failure of the parent company. Rather than abandon the enterprise, Lord Montagu set up his own fishery, called the Beaulieu Fisheries, farming oysters on the same site as the failed enterprise on the lower reaches of the Beaulieu River. Soon after taking this over, Lord Montagu's attention turned to the potential of Sowley Pond, with discussion from September 1886 as to its stocking with black bass. By 1890, trout became the name of the game, and, in 1901, Ethelbert Collins was manager of the 'Trout and Oyster Fisheries'. The following year advertisements appeared for the Beaulieu Fisheries from which trout ova, fry and young stock could be had. In 1906, Lord Montagu soon dropped that part of the fisheries breeding trout and this was put out on a lease for 21 years to Gibbs brothers from south-west London. The fishery included Hartford Heath Cottage and consisted of a large number of holding ponds.



John, Lord Montagu, (centre) overseeing seine netting on the Beaulieu River, circa 1900

Many of the ponds can still be seen today, being concrete lined ponds with vertical sides up to 2 metres in depth. That the enterprise was a going concern is confirmed by the list of stock appended to the lease, which included: 56,000 brown trout, and 25,000 Loch Leven

brown trout, fry of 3 weeks old; with almost 5,000 other brown and rainbow up to 7 inches in length. During their tenure they restocked the Serpentine in Hyde Park with fish bred at Beaulieu. The fishery passed through a number of hands until March 1919 when Sir Julian Orde took it over but suffered great disappointment and considerable financial loss during his early years on restocking the fishery. Sir Julian obtained a supply of live fish from a hatchery at Hungerford, in Berkshire, but unfortunately 'the fish which had been used to a chalk water were tipped without ceremony into the Beaulieu Water, which is of a totally different character being heavily charged with iron' rather than being slowly introduced to the new water source by stages. The next morning when Sir Julian paid his first visit, he found 90% of his trout floating upside down.' Whether Sir Julian renewed his attempt at restocking the fishery is unclear, but in 1929, when Colonel Pollitt took on The House in the Wood he wished to improve the supply of water. As such a hydraulic ram and purpose built pond were installed on the Hartford Stream; the pond being so sited that it flooded a number of the Hartford fishery ponds, thus indicating the probable and at least partial abandonment of the fishery by that time.



Plan of the Fishery at Hartford Heath in 1915

Downstream of the Hartford fishery within the old Abbey precincts a new pond was created at the close of the 19th century. This was provided with a set of small fry ponds and may have been an extension of the Hartford Fishery and was certainly leased with it in 1915. This pond had however silted up by the 1950s and was later drained. A similar venture was set up around the same time beside the outflow of Sowley Pond, the idea was to stock the Pond with trout. However, circumstances arose which prevented the original projector, Charles Braun, to attain his goal, but his successor Cedric Scott later took up the challenge and provided the Loch Leven, Brown and Rainbow Trout with which the Pond was stocked following its draining and restoration in 1907.

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Boarmans Pond,
Beaulieu Estate, summer 2018



Stew Pond,
Beaulieu Estate, summer 2018

Today the remaining fisheries are sporting enterprises, the medieval fish production being long consigned to the past, though seine netting of the Beaulieu River which continued regularly up into the 20th century has since been revived, thus keeping the tradition alive. In 1983, the Countryside Education Trust cleaned out the old Hartford fishery, but nature has once more reclaimed them, perhaps their smaller scale pond dipping activities at Middle Pond are easier to maintain.

Richard Reeves
Originally published by the
New Forest Catchment Partnership

Murder at Beaulieu Abbey

An author, who has produced a succession of novels set in abbeys, is of interest because the setting of her latest novel is in our neighbourhood. Gillian Strathcarron takes a look at it.

Cassandra Clark's *Murder at Beaulieu Abbey* tells an exciting tale of secrets and skulduggery set in and around Beaulieu Abbey in the late 14th Century. The central character is Hildegard of Meaux, Prioress of a Cistercian convent in the East Riding of Yorkshire. Because of her resourcefulness and courage, Hildegard is often sent on spying missions to other Cistercian Abbeys in England by her superiors in the Church. Hildegard travels with two monks militant who have spent years escorting pilgrims to Jerusalem and back.

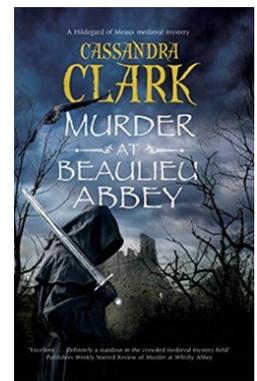
The background to the spying mission is the Western Schism of 1378–1417, when the Catholic Church was divided between allegiance to two Popes, one in Rome and one in Avignon. As in all good spying missions, Hildegard was offered a cover story of collecting the young daughter and heiress of a knight whose marriage had been arranged with a noble family. Things go wrong from the start as the heiress is abducted and a young novice monk is murdered in the barn at St. Leonard's. Hildegard has the task of first finding the heiress and also solving the mysterious murder.

A panorama of medieval life is described in fascinating detail, but the real hero of the book is the forest itself; dense, wild, dark and windswept.

Gillian Strathcarron

Reference

Cassandra Clark, *Murder at Beaulieu Abbey*, Severn House 2021



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