



BEAULIEU HISTORY SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

No. 43 October 2023

Editor's Column

Recent Meetings

On 25 May 2023 Dr Christina Dykes presented a talk titled **New Forest Commoners: Life in the 19th Century**, covering the difficult lives they led over the centuries. She focused particularly on the 19th century when their livelihoods were threatened by the demand for New Forest timber causing the desire to enclose vast tracts of New Forest land.

On 22 June 2023, in the last of the spring/summer series of talks, Peter Power presented the **Special Operations Executive**. He looked behind this WW2 agency into the exceptional characters it attracted, the courageous men and women who served in it, including Beaulieu's role in their training. Peter is a member of the Special Forces Club which commemorates those who served in the SOE in WWII. There he met and talked with some of the agents.

On page 5 of this newsletter, Peter tells the story of one SOE agent, the White Rabbit.

Our first autumn/winter talk on 27 September 2023 was **The Myth, John Montagu's Adventure and the building of Buckler's Hard** presented by Ken Robinson at the Master Builder's House Hotel at Buckler's Hard. It considered the extraordinary accomplishments and actions of John 2nd Duke of Montagu in the early 1700s, who mounted a most expensive adventure from which the unexpected outcome was the building of Buckler's Hard.



This talk was popular and had limited seating so it is being repeated for more members to attend on 10 November 2023 at the Royal Southampton Yacht Club. The repeat event is already fully booked.

Forthcoming Meetings

On 27 November 2023, Marc Heighway will give a talk on the **Needs Oar Point Airfield**. Although the airfield's name does take after Needs Ore Point at the mouth of the Beaulieu River, that is not where it was and the word 'Oar' was misspelt. The airfield was close to Buckler's Hard, had 1,000 men and 120 fighter bombers, made a significant contribution in WWII, and little trace of it is left. It's an intriguing story rarely told.

This talk being close to Christmas, seasonal drinks and finger food will be served.

The society's **Annual General Meeting** will take place towards the end of January, to be followed by a presentation.



John Pemberton



A Typhoon fighter bomber at Needs Oar Point

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Dates for your Diary

27 November 2023 6:30pm
Needs Oar Point Airfield
presented by Marc Heighway
at Beaulieu Village Hall

Date at end January 2024
Annual General Meeting and presentation to be announced
at Beaulieu Village Hall

Website

The society's website (see link at bottom of page) has new features:

For new members to join – select menu item Membership and Join the Society. The subscription is £5 per year. Payments can be made by debit/credit card and PayPal.

To use other new features, you need to log in first. **To edit your details** such as email address and phone number - select Membership and My Details. **To renew annual subscription** - select Membership and Renew Membership.

To book events which require it - select Events and follow the instructions. **To buy a society published book** - select Books.

If you have a problem, or any other query, click Contact Us at the top of the screen. This does not require you to be logged in.

If you cannot use the website, queries can be raised by email to secretary@beaulieuhistorysociety.org.uk.

Village Recreation in the 20th Century

Local historian and regular contributor Anthony Norris writes:

Not many people will know that Beaulieu village had a Recreation Ground, let alone where it was. In my youth the field, affectionately known as the Old Rec, had ceased to be used for its original function but still retained its name. The only use, I recall, was for the annual visit of Adlams fun-fair. There was, in the field, evidence of its previous uses. There were the remnants of a wooden building and alongside, an enormously high swing, now devoid of rope and seat.

In the years prior to the Second World War people who lived in villages had little opportunity to venture outside the parish boundaries. As a result, recreational activities were largely in-house. Beaulieu was no exception.

Beaulieu has had a very successful cricket team since 1848 when the whole team were usually the village fraternity, and most, members of the church choir. The present cricket ground is that which was used in the very first club matches, the ground being provided by the 5th Duke of Buccleuch.

Undoubtedly there were other sporting activities at this time but no formal clubs even though, probably, neighbouring villages formed the opposition. Activities such as football, could not be played on a cricket ground for obvious reasons so an alternative venue needed to be provided.

It was not until the start of the twentieth century when clubs were formed for other sports that a specific venue was provided by the then Lord Montagu (Henry Douglas-Scott-Montagu, 1832-1905). This was no doubt following the decision to form a football club.

The question was, where would the football team play? I believe that it was then that Lord Montagu de-

A football club has been formed for Beaulieu, and it will be known as the "Beaulieu Manor Football Club," the colours being green and dark red.—Lord Montagu was elected president, and the officers are as follows:— Captain, Mr W. Shotter; vice-president, Mr. E Langdale Appleton; Hon. secretary, Mr. T Hendey; committee, Messrs. E. Payne, F. Tupper, Dean, Brearton, and Lempriere.

Hampshire Independent, November 12th 1904

decided to provide a field, away from the cricket ground, where other activities such as football and tennis could be played by the villagers.

The field became known as the Recreational Ground and provided a venue for not only sports but other village activities, such as fetes and fairs. The field is difficult to identify now, as it was divided in two by Beaulieu By-Pass when it opened in 1972. I remember it, in my youth, to be the field marked **X** in the pre-1972 map below.



Recently Clive Webb gave me a team photograph of the Beaulieu Football Club which shows the thatched cottage on the banks of the mill pond in the background. The date of this photograph can be estimated as the young man second from the left in the front row is named as George Crouch.



George was born in 1905 and it is likely that the photograph was taken soon after the re-commencement of fixtures in 1919 after the 1st World War. George was a prominent member of the Beaulieu Church choir for 69 years until he died in 1982.

To George's right is Bert Webb, father of Clive Webb, who ran a building and timber business from the Estate Yard in Beaulieu High Street before moving to Hatchet. Standing, in his goalkeepers kit, was Percy Toomer who ran Queensmeade Farm prior to taking over as licensee of the Royal Oak in succession to his parents.

Between the wars, a wooden Changing Room was built on the Recreation Ground, paid for by an American named Sly, who often stayed at the Montagu Arms Hotel and whose son died in a fire. His son had played for Beaulieu when he was staying here.

The football club existed until the start of the 2nd World War but did not begin again in 1945. The Old Rec reverted to farming land and the Changing Room was eventually destroyed by Dave Kitcher's cattle who grazed there in the summer.

Also in the corner furthest from the road was a hard tennis court. This was probably for the use of the villagers rather than by the members of the village Tennis and Croquet Club. The Tennis club played on the cricket ground and croquet was played on the Palace House grounds as well as the garden of Reverend Powles (Vicar of Beaulieu 1886-1939) at Curtle House.

Now, the needs of village population can be, due to the advent of the car, served elsewhere. Visiting the Old Rec a few days ago nothing remains to show its previous existence; it is at present covered by a field of maize.

Anthony Norris

Dogs Trained for War in the New Forest

During the First World War, an estimated 20,000 dogs were trained on both sides to perform roles including message delivery and serving as sentries on the battlefield. The demand was so high that during the last year of the war, many strays caught on the streets of Britain were sent to be trained as war dogs. There was even a public appeal made for more dogs after which more than seven thousand pet owners handed theirs over for service.

The training the dogs received was intense. It included running through trenches and fields whilst explosives and gun shots were let off. This was designed to replicate the conditions they would face when put into battle.

Once on the battlefield, a war dog could cover ten to fifteen miles in a couple of hours, during which they would deliver messages, food, supplies, and medicine to troops on the front line. The animals navigated waterlogged trenches and open battlefields under a torrent of machine gun fire as bombs dropped all around them. It's likely that they would have been deliberately targeted when spotted by snipers, as the enemy would

have known the dogs were likely carrying important information or supplies.

One report explained how the dogs' eyes were badly affected by gas, and how they could be unreliable under heavy shelling, often forgetting their training. However, they frequently did a good enough job in replacing tasks where human runners would have been exposed to great risk.

But what does this have to do with the New Forest?

The story starts in Essex, where a War Dog Training School was set-up at Shoeburyness Artillery School. By the end of the First World War, it was felt that the dogs had performed with enough promise that training should continue to see if their success rates could be improved. The aim was to develop their canine military skills and have a group of dogs ready for service in case war broke out again.

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However, the school soon outgrew the Essex site, and moved to the New Forest in 1918. The new location for the War Dog Training School was Matley Wood near Lyndhurst, on the site of what had previously been a Trench Mortar School. It was the perfect location, as there were existing trenches that could have been used to help train the two hundred dogs brought to the forest location.

The dogs were trained whilst being exposed to the sights and sounds of close gunfire and explosions. As with most dog training, food rewards were used to help the dogs relate gunfire to food, so they would run as quickly as possible to get rations upon delivery of a message.

Additional exercises included one where the dogs had to return to their kennels from an unknown position, being taken further from home each time. This did become problematic though, as I believe some of the dogs attacked pigs that the New Forest Commoners had put out for pannage, even killing some of the animals.

This clash with New Forest traditions may well have contributed to the War Dog Training School's short tenancy at Matley Wood as it was relocated to Bulford on Salisbury Plains in May 1919.

But this short period they spent in the New Forest undoubtedly helped contribute to the successes their canine descendants had during the Second World War. And now, over a hundred years after they left the New Forest, there is the 1st Military Working Dog Regiment which currently has nearly four hundred working dogs in service.

If you ever find yourself walking in Matley Wood, perhaps even with your own dog, give pause for thought of those two hundred dogs who once trained for war in the New Forest.

Marc Heighway

Sources

E H Richardson, *British War Dogs*, Skeffington & Son Ltd 1920 <https://archive.org/details/britishwardogsth00richrich>

Images from *New Forest Knowledge* website <https://nfknowledge.org/contributions/war-dog-training-school-matley-woods-lyndhurst>



The Adventures of the 'White Rabbit' of the SOE

June 1940 was a terrible year for Britain. The drive of Nazi Germany seemed unstoppable and apart from Bomber Command we were left with little or nothing to strike back with. The prospect of jack-boots marching down Whitehall suddenly didn't appear quite so far-fetched.

Just a few days after the Dunkirk evacuation, when our darkest hour rested most heavily across the nation, Winston Churchill ordered the creation of a unique unit of men and woman saboteurs (not to be confused with MI5/6 spies) to create havoc behind enemy lines and so weaken the Nazi ability to appear all conquering.

The task was given to the Minister of Economic Warfare, Hugh Dalton, with the famous direction from Churchill: "and now go and set Europe ablaze". With these instructions, the Special Operations Executive was born, about which much has already been written.

To begin with, SOE set about building up a secret force of about 470 agents sent to France, of whom at least 40 were women. (By the end of the war their ranks had swelled to roughly 13,000, stretching across numerous enemy-held countries around the globe.)

The 'White Rabbit'

This is the much condensed story of just one SOE agent: Wing Commander Forest Frederick Edward Yeo-Thomas (1902–1964). He was nicknamed 'Tommy', but the Gestapo knew him as the 'White Rabbit'.

Educated in England and France (expelled for 'unruly behaviour' from 2 schools) Tommy first tried to join the French Foreign Legion but failed. Then came the RAF and in due course selection to SOE. In 1942, after instruction at secret venues such as SOE Beaulieu 'finishing school', he undertook parachute training ready to return to France to try and unite different underground armies fighting the Nazis who were not then well coordinated.

February 1943 - First parachute drop into France

After his first parachute drop into occupied France, Tommy decided to live in a Parisian flat also occupied by members of the Gestapo on the assumption the Nazis would never expect such temerity as enemy agents staying at the same address. By now he was also joined by another French agent from London, Pierre Brossolette.



After several weeks in France Tommy, another SOE agent and a US airman on the run after baling out, returned to London by a RAF Lysander aircraft in the dead of night. The next evening the BBC broadcast on the French Service, "The Little White Rabbit has returned to his hutch" (the BBC regularly broadcast coded messages known only to resistance fighters and SOE agents).

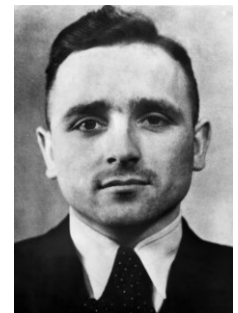
September 1943 - Second parachute drop into France

A few weeks later, disaster struck SOE when two of the critical French Resistance leaders were captured by the Gestapo. Tommy and another agent who was previously in France with him, Brossolette, were parachuted into France once more to discover how serious the situation was.

Both agents set about the massive task of reforming the resistance in the absence of its leaders, knowing that D-Day and the liberation of France was by now not that far away.

At the same time the Gestapo had a habit of waiting in 'blown' flats (already raided by the Nazis) for the arrival of other agents, so Tommy always met others in the street. If an agent thought that he was being followed he would wear a scarf around his neck and a newspaper in his pocket. In which case the agents would pass each other without any recognition.

On one occasion Tommy was on a French train where, having tricked the guard into keeping an eye on his suitcase, he pretended to be a Nazi supporter to get a seat in a section occupied by German soldiers. He soon bribed the attendant to get a better seat in the restaurant carriage but was horrified to find the seat he was directed to was opposite the Chief of Lyon Gestapo, Nikolaus Barbie - the infamous 'Butcher of Lyon' who had tortured to death previous members of the Resistance. Tommy was terrified that he had been recognised.



Nikolaus Barbie

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When his meal was finished, he spent the rest of the journey standing up in the corridor ready to jump from the train at a moment's notice. Fortunately, he was not recognised.

In due course he was directed to return to London by Lysander aircraft that, as always, landed in total darkness in an unlit field. Back in London, Tommy became disgruntled at the lack of equipment available for SOE to wage its secret war. He somehow managed to get a personal audience with Winston Churchill who on being told in straight forward terms what was required, duly agreed. On the directions of the Prime Minister SOE resources increased. However, Tommy's luck would not last forever.

February 1944 - Third Parachute drop into France



Pierre Brossolette

On hearing that his good friend and fellow agent Brossolette had been captured by the Gestapo, Tommy returned to France to hopefully rescue him.

However, on 21st March 1944 Tommy was arrested by the Gestapo (probably betrayed) who at once realised who they had just captured. By now the 'White Rabbit' had become famous. In due course he was eventually sent to Buchenwald concentration camp from where he somehow smuggled out a letter that described his situation:

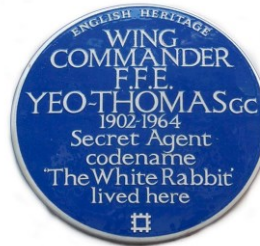
"I was caught coming round a corner and had not an earthly chance, being collared and handcuffed before I could say 'knife'. I was badly beaten up in the car on the way to Gestapo H.Q., arriving there with a twisted nose and a head about twice its normal size.

"I was then subjected to four days of continuous grilling, being beaten up and also being put into a bath of icy cold water, legs and arms chained, and held head downwards under water until almost drowned, then pulled out and asked if I had anything to say. This I underwent six times, but I managed to hold out and gave nothing away.

"I nearly lost my left arm as a result of the tortures as I got blood poisoning through my wrist being cut to the bone by chains and remaining unattended with handcuffs biting into them for about 6 days."

Following the War

After further gruelling adventures Tommy survived the war. He was one of many exceptionally brave agents working for a secret organisation described by it's brilliant, but cynical, code maker, Leo Marks, as "pitted and pockmarked with improbable people



24-28 Queen Square, London

doing implausible things for imponderable purposes and sometimes succeeding by coincidence". Their effort in Europe was credited by General Eisenhower with having shortened the war by at least six months. Given his adventurous spirit, Yeo-Thomas was awarded the Military Cross and the

George Cross, and Ian Fleming wrote in his memoirs that he was one of his inspirations behind the fictional character of James Bond.

After Churchill's election defeat in July 1945, SOE lost its biggest supporter. It also faced renewed opposition from MI6 and others in Whitehall who wanted sole control of British intelligence related services and always opposed SOE.

Within a short space of time SOE was extinguished and along with it a huge number of crucial loyalties, trusted contacts and sincere friendships, uniquely forged in the high terror of warfare. Never to be rekindled.

On his return to Paris with his long-term partner Barbara Dean, Tommy resumed a senior position within the Molyneux fashion house as well as the Federation of British Industries. He died aged 61 from a massive hemorrhage, quite likely linked to the extreme trauma he suffered during the war.

Peter Power

Peter Power is a member of the London-based Special Forces Club which commemorates those who served in the SOE in WWII. There he met and talked with some of the agents.

The 'Silent Assassins' of WW2

New Forest historian **Marc Heighway** got together recently with another historian **Andy Chatterton** and history TV presenter **Dan Snow** to look for secret bunkers in the New Forest used by auxiliary units of the British military forces in WW2. The units would have been silent assassins of the Germans had they invaded Britain.



A podcast telling what they found has been created called *WWII Britain: The Home Guard's Silent Assassins*. It is in the podcast series *Dan Snow's History Hit* and can be found at:

<https://play.acast.com/s/dansnowshistoryhit/wwii-britain-the-home-guards-silent-assassins>

The History of Hatchet Mill

When driving from Beaulieu towards Lymington, after you turn left at Hatchet Pond, you see the pond to your right. Many may not be aware of the building below them to the left of the road.

Hatchet Mill, tucked away on private land, barely visible from public roads, is little known; whilst nearby Hatchet Pond is one of the New Forest's most striking landscape features. Yet the history of both is inextricably linked. Both are within the bounds of East Boldre parish, although both are also only one and a quarter miles (2 kilometres) from Beaulieu village centre.

Indeed, many people associate Hatchet Pond with Beaulieu rather than East Boldre, which is hardly surprising as the nearby heathland to the south-west is Beaulieu Heath. Furthermore, motorists travelling from Beaulieu to Brockenhurst, and Beaulieu to Lymington, pass close to Hatchet Pond, albeit just outside the Beaulieu parish boundary, whilst the houses of East Boldre, to the south-east, often go unnoticed.



Even period postcards, such as those published by E.A. Sweetman and Sons (shown here), referred to Hatched Mill, Beaulieu. History also contrived to add to the confusion, for the village of East Boldre until 1839 was known as Beaulieu Rails - it originated as a 'squatter settlement' created by unauthorised, often 18th century, encroachments on land belonging to the Crown beside the Beaulieu parish / Beaulieu estate boundary bank (which was topped by wooden railings).

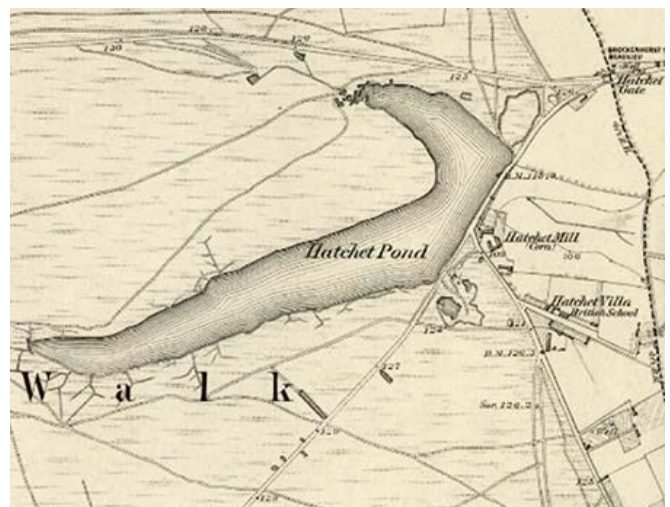
Hatchet Mill is not shown on early maps, simply because it did not exist before Hatchet Pond was created. The mill building, according to East Boldre Parish Council, 'is believed to have been built in the 18th century' - presumably the late 18th century, In 1801 the mill and fields were owned by Charles Kearley, perhaps the same Charles Kearley who died on 27th May, 1842 and was buried in a small, now defunct graveyard close to an equally defunct Methodist chapel in East Boldre's Massey Lane. Victorian and later directories provide information about the mill and its millers, although in many cases the details are fairly limited. The Post Office Directory, published by Kelly and Co in



The site of Hatched Pond shown on Thomas Milne's 1791 map

1855, for example, mentions 'Hatched Mill and Swinsley, 1 mile south-west of Beaulieu' - Swinsley is recalled by the current day Swinesleys Farm, a little to the south-east of Hatched Gate - but does not provide anything further. William White's 1859 directory is, however, a little more forthcoming and has the following entry: 'Hatched (sic) Pond, which covers about 30 acres, abounds with fish, and supplies a stream which turns the large over-shot wheel of Hatched Mill.....', and lists under Corn Millers, 'Biddlecombe Benjamin, Hatched Mill'.

William White's 1859 directory is a little more forthcoming and has the following entry: 'Hatched (sic) Pond, which covers about 30 acres, abounds with fish, and supplies a stream which turns the large over-shot wheel of Hatched Mill...', and lists under Corn Millers, 'Biddlecombe Benjamin, Hatched Mill'.



Hatched Pond and Hatched Mill shown on 1898 Ordnance Survey map

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Meanwhile, J.G.Harrod's 1865 directory again lists Benjamin Biddlecombe, but simply as a farmer of Hatchet Mill; whilst in the Post Office directory of 1875, again published by Kelly and Co, and in Kelly's own directory of 1880, Mrs Ann Biddlecombe is shown as the farmer and miller. By the time of Kelly's 1889 Directory, Jas Biddlecombe is listed as the miller, and the mill as a steam and water mill. Hatchet Mill is mentioned again in the 1898 Kelly's directory, by which time Samuel Suffield Biddlecombe is the miller, and the mill is again listed as a steam and water mill.

But in Kelly's 1911 directory, Charles Carey-Wood of Hatchett Mill is listed only as a private resident - there is no reference to milling although the 1909 Ordnance Survey map continues to show the mill. In the early 20th century, and sometimes a little before then, many rural corn mills closed or converted to producing animal feeds - competition from cheaper imported grain processed in huge, often coastal, highly efficient water turbine or steam powered flour mills was a major factor in their demise).

Subsequently, for at least part of the period between the two World Wars, and for a time after the Second World War, the Granary Tea Room operated from the mill complex and were immortalised in a series of contemporary postcards.

Jeff Tucker



Sources

This article was first published in the January 2023 newsletter of the New Forest History and Archaeology Group, of which Jeff Tucker is secretary and newsletter editor. Thanks for permission to reproduce it.

Some of the material in this article originated from the New Forest Explorers Guide www.newforestexplorersguide.co.uk.

Please note Hatchet Mill is in private hands and is not open to the public.



Hatchet Pond and Mill shown on 2004 Ordnance Survey map

Fiona, Lady Montagu of Beaulieu obituary

Following the passing of Fiona, Lady Montagu in May of this year and the memorial service earlier this month at the Domus building at Beaulieu Abbey, here is an obituary reproduced from *The Times*.

Second wife of the car obsessed Lord Montagu who helped with running the National Motor Museum on his estate.

Thursday, May 18 2023

As the chatelaine of Palace House on the 9,000-acre Beaulieu estate in Hampshire, Fiona, Lady Montagu shared her home with up to 400,000 visitors a year. They came to look around the 80-room manor house — the ancestral seat for almost 500 years of the family of her husband Edward, 3rd Lord Montagu — and to visit the attractions in its grounds that included the National Motor Museum.



Montagu on her wedding day ALAMY

Established in the 1950s to help pay for the upkeep of the estate, the museum was a masterstroke by her husband that enabled Beaulieu to outstrip Longleat, Woburn Abbey and Chatsworth in tourist numbers. At the peak of Beaulieu's pulling power, it was reported that only the Tower of London among British historical attractions had more paying visitors. However, there was, as Lady Montagu discovered, a price to pay in lack of privacy and in the stress of keeping the enterprise going. "I live in the most visited private home in the world," she said. "It's a strange life when your home is not your own."

She once entered her bedroom to find a little girl sitting at her dressing table, brushing her hair. "That's when I decided that my bedroom should be out of bounds to visitors", she said.

She valiantly supported her husband's commercial endeavours, but running the estate took its toll and in 1990 she suffered a breakdown. "I had a complete collapse because I was burning the candle at both ends," she said. Her husband sent her to a naturopathic clinic in Canada to recover, although the pressures of running Beaulieu resulted in two further breakdowns. At times of stress, her coping mechanism was to abandon the rolling acres of Hampshire for a flat in London, prompting friends to joke that she was "the only woman who goes to London to get away from it all". She also turned to new age cures and philosophies and described herself as "a student of metaphysics". It led to her becoming a global ambassador for the Club of Budapest, an inter-faith club of the great and the good seeking "a shift toward a more peaceful, equitable, and sustainable world". Members ranged from the Dalai Lama to Sharon Stone.

She is survived by her son Jonathan Deane Montagu-Scott, a biotechnologist and cancer researcher, and by her two stepchildren Ralph, 4th Baron Montagu of Beaulieu, and Mary Montagu-Scott from her husband's first marriage to Belinda, Lady Montagu, which was dissolved. Belinda died last year. As a second wife, Fiona noted that the husband she had inherited from the first Lady Montagu "only had one bride, and that was Beaulieu".

On their marriage in 1974 she took charge of a domestic staff of 30 at Palace House, including a butler, footman, cook and scullery maid. After her husband's death (obituary September 1, 2015) she was relieved to escape the responsibility of running Beaulieu and moved to London permanently. Her stepson Ralph inherited the estate and took over its running with his wife, Ailsa. "Living at Beaulieu has been like being on a rollercoaster," she said.

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She knew little about her husband-to-be before they met GETTY IMAGES

Born Fiona Margaret Herbert in 1943 in what is now Zimbabwe, she was the daughter of Richard and Isobel Herbert. She spent much of her childhood in Sussex before finishing her education in Switzerland. Back in Britain, she was working as a film production assistant when she was introduced to Lord Montagu. Seventeen years his junior, she was at first unaware of his bisexuality and his colourful past.

An escort of Princess Margaret in the early 1950s, he was described in the gossip columns as “Britain’s most eligible bachelor”, but in 1954 he was jailed for “consensual homosexual offences” with two RAF servicemen. The case became a cause célèbre and contributed to the setting up of the Wolfenden Committee, which in its 1957 report recommended the decriminalisation of homosexual activity in private between consenting adults, though it was another decade before the legislation was enacted.

“The first thing he did when we started dating was to give me a book about the trial,” Lady Montagu told the Sunday Telegraph. “But I wasn’t interested in his sex life. I was more worried that he had so much energy and I wouldn’t be able to keep up with him. I think part of the reason he married me was that I was non-judgmental.”

She threw herself into commercial and social life at Beaulieu. “Parties did exist before I came but they’ve grown. I do love everyone to have a good time,” she said. No bash was more memorable than her own 70th birthday party, which was scheduled for December 2013, but she delayed it until the following spring on the advice of her astrologer. A great Elvis Presley fan, she ordered a rhinestone-encrusted white jumpsuit and guests entered into the spirit of the occasion, turning up in a variety of different Elvis iterations, either in Las Vegas costumes or dressed as Teddy Boys and GIs. Even her two springer spaniels wore Elvis capes and jewelled collars. An Elvis impersonator sang *Blue Suede Shoes* and *Don’t Be Cruel* and the themed buffet featured Presley’s favourite foods: peanut and jelly canapés, meatloaf and hot dogs.



She was a life long fan of Elvis Presley AP

She wore her costume again the following year when the Beaulieu motor museum took possession of the burgundy and silver Cadillac Seville that Presley had driven the day before he died in 1977. Photographed in her Elvis costume in front of his car, she noted that she had married into aristocracy, but there was only one King.

Fiona, Lady Montagu of Beaulieu, chatelaine of Palace House, was born on December 29, 1943. She died after a short illness on May 14, 2023, aged 79

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