



BEAULIEU HISTORY SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

No. 28 February 2016

Editor's Column

Past Meetings

The talk on 13th November 2015 on **The Heraldry of Beaulieu** was given by Timothy Duke. Timothy is one of the senior Heralds of the College of Arms in London, his title being Norroy and Ulster King of Arms. He told us about the history of the college, the fascinating work of designing a coat of arms, and in

conveyed his knowledge of the important collection of paintings at Palace House in Beaulieu.



Portrait of the Third Earl of Southampton at Palace House



particular described the coats of arms of the Montagus of Beaulieu over many generations. For more on the College of Arms, see www.college-of-arms.gov.uk.

At the **Annual General Meeting** on 19th February, Ralph, Lord Montagu retired from the society's committee reflecting his increased duties following the death of his father. His sister Mary Montagu-Scott kindly agreed to join the committee, as has Ken Robinson. Both have already contributed richly to the society through research, articles, talks and visits.

The talk which followed the AGM was on **History Seen Through Paintings: The Collection at Palace House**, by art historian David Moore-Gwyn. David admirably

Forthcoming meetings

On Friday 6th May Tony Norris will give a talk on **The History of Beaulieu Abbey Church**. Tony has undertaken in-depth research on the church, its interior fixtures and its graveyard. The talk will reveal aspects of the building you never knew.

Website

The development of the website www.beaulieuhistorysociety.org.uk continues. In addition to information on society events, an archive of newsletters, presentations and photo galleries, the site now contains audio recordings of several talks given to meetings of the society. These include the **History Seen Through Paintings** talk and a slideshow of the paintings featured.

For copyright reasons, access is limited by username and password distributed to members only.

John Pemberton

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Dates for your Diary

Friday 6 May 2016 6pm
The History of Beaulieu Abbey Church
by Tony Norris
in Beaulieu Abbey Church

Subscriptions

Membership fees of £5 per member were due at the start of the 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 what is being paid (Membership, DVD, name of event) and your surname otherwise we may not know who sent it.

If available to you, this is a preferable alternative in cost and convenience to sending a cheque to the secretary Gillian Strathcarron at her address on the back page.

Beaulieu Abbey: Two Ancient Pictures and a New Book

In a recent edition of the *Times Literary Supplement*, John Coles noticed this painting of King John holding in his left hand a portrayal of Beaulieu Abbey. He writes as follows...



Historia Anglorum c1250

I had not seen the painting before. Hockey does not refer to it in his *Beaulieu, King John's Abbey* nor have I seen it in other standard texts. It does not appear in the permanent exhibition in the Domus or the accompanying film. Yet it is of considerable interest to local historians. It must be the oldest representation of the Abbey in existence and it reminds us that this Cistercian foundation was no ordinary one.

We owe the painting to the mediaeval chronicler, Matthew Paris, who inserted it in his *Historia Anglorum* (History of the English) around the year 1250. The text of this chronicle is prefaced by images of eight English kings holding buildings that represent their religious foundations. William the Conqueror holds Battle Abbey, Stephen has Faversham, Henry the Second has Waltham, Richard the Lion Heart holds St. Thomas of Canterbury, Henry the Third holds Westminster Abbey

and John has Beaulieu Abbey. The portrayal of the Abbey was clearly not intended to be an accurate representation of the building. Or at least I cannot relate it to the plans reconstructed by various authors. But here we have John, in a pose much like that of the other kings, holding his foundation with something like pride.

Matthew Paris later produced another and very different painting of the king.



Abbreviato Chronicorum Angliae 1250-59

His crown is falling off and he no longer holds Beaulieu Abbey in his hand. The Abbey is behind him. He is indeed empty-handed. And the painter makes him point to his falling crown.

Matthew Paris was a bitter critic of the King. He wrote that John was "a tyrant rather than a king, a subverter rather than a governor, an oppressor of his own people and a friend to strangers, a lion to his own subjects, a lamb to foreigners and rebels". Paris supported the barons against the king at the time of Magna Carta and described John at that time as the "last of kings, principal abomination of the English, disgrace to the English nobility". It is not surprising that his second

painting was so unflattering. John had succeeded in losing all his lands in Northern France to the French, had attracted excommunication by the Pope from 1209 to 1213 and, by the time of his death in 1216, was embattled in civil war. He had lost so much of his kingdom that he earned the nickname John Lackland.

Unreliable though Matthew Paris is, his account, along with others, led to generations of British schoolchildren being taught that John was a "bad" king. Recent historians have produced more balanced accounts, one going so far as to describe John as "a hard-working administrator, an able man, an able general". That debate will doubtless continue.

But back to Beaulieu Abbey. A book *King John and Religion* published last year by the historian Paul Webster of Cardiff University examines in detail King John's attitude to religion. This publication contains a good deal of material on the King's attitude to the Abbey and his connexions with it. Webster believes that John showed commitment to the Abbey throughout his reign and that his action in founding the monastery "represented a significant element of royal desire for intercessory prayer, fitting a family and regnal tradition of establishing houses of ascetic orders. Most significantly, it was a personal religious initiative. John may even have intended to be buried at Beaulieu."

The foundation charter refers to John as a confrater of the white monks who undertook to pray for his soul in all Cistercian monasteries. Allocating his royal hunting lodge, Bellus Locus Regis, to the monks, the king wrote in August 1204 to all Cistercian abbots, urgently asking for aid for the new abbey.

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The scale of the building suggested that it was intended to be the largest Cistercian Abbey in England, reflecting its royal patronage. The king contributed regularly to the construction costs. His total contribution has been estimated at £2000 (a million pounds and more in today's money).

Webster provides several instances of John's attention to his foundation in Beaulieu. In 1206 the custodians of the King's wine in Southampton were ordered to provide the monks of Beaulieu with a cask of wine for use in the sacraments of the mass. This was repeated in 1215 and may have become an annual gift from John's successors. He also gave the abbey additional lands and grain. A royal grant of 120 cows and 12 bulls allowed the monks to develop a herd of livestock.

King John visited Beaulieu on three occasions, in May 1206, December 1212 and March 1213. And he employed the Abbot of Beaulieu as a

regular envoy on matters of great importance. During the disputed election to the archbishopric of Canterbury in 1205 Abbot Hugh was sent on a number of diplomatic missions and he continued to act as an envoy during the period of the Pope's interdiction and excommunication of the King.

Paul Webster does not attempt to describe the King's innermost religious feelings, judging, rightly, that there is simply no historical evidence on which to base an assessment of that sort. But he argues plausibly that, weakened by the loss of Normandy and other lands, and his very throne being disputed, John may well have wanted to bolster his position by creating a major religious foundation and establishing a dynastic church of his own, thus emphasising his god-given status as a king.

There is some suggestion that John's preference would have been to be buried at Beaulieu on his death but perhaps because of the civil war and French invasion he was instead buried next to the

shrine of St. Wulfstan at Worcester Cathedral. The monks of Beaulieu petitioned the Pope in 1228 to have the body transferred to Beaulieu but nothing came of this initiative.

Both the two pictures and this new account of King John and religion remind us that in the early thirteenth century Beaulieu was of national importance. The Abbey was unique in being the foundation of the ruling monarch. He gave it special and sustained attention and visited it on three occasions. And the Abbot was a figure of significance at the English court and internationally.

Sir John Coles

Hockey Frederick, *Beaulieu: King John's Abbey*, Pioneer Publications 1976

Paris Matthew, *Historia Anglorum*, c1250 (London, British Library, Royal MS 14 C VII)

Paris Matthew, *Abbreuiato Chronicorum Angliae*, 1250-59 (London, British Library, MS Cotton Claudius D VI)

Webster Paul, *King John and Religion*, Boydell Press 2015

Books to be published

Two books are to be published under the name of the Beaulieu History Society over the next year:

Older Houses of Beaulieu is a record of some of the interesting houses of Beaulieu to which the society has made visits over a number of years. Research done on the houses, resulting in talks given by the owners, has been summarised and photographs included.

Beaulieu in Tudor and Stuart Times 1500-1673 is an unpublished book written in 1973 by Alan Bartlett, the archivist of the Beaulieu Estate at the time. The book has only been available hitherto in typescript form held in the Beaulieu archives. It is reputed to contain some original research and its publication has been long awaited. It's chapters are:

The Latter Days of Beaulieu Abbey	Tenants and Rents
Beaulieu and the Wriothesleys 1538-1581	Beaulieu at Work
Beaulieu and the Wriothesleys 1581-1624	The Manor House and
The Topography of Beaulieu	Abbey Precinct
The Government of Manor and Parish	Families and Homes

Many thanks are owed to history society stalwarts Ian and Gillian Strathcarron who have taken on the task of publishing the books through their publishing company. Copies will of course be available to members and the Bartlett book is expected to be on sale nationally.



James I of England, the first Stuart king

Illustrations of Pearl's Life

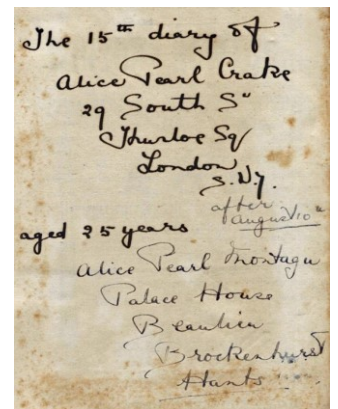
On 25 September 2015, Ken Robinson and Mary Montagu-Scott gave a talk entitled Pearl's Cowes Weeks. Pearl married John, Lord Montagu in 1920 and is a grand-mother of Mary Montagu-Scott and her brother Ralph, the current Lord Montagu. The yacht races on the Solent during Cowes Week were an annual highlight, which Pearl watched and sailed in, and she was at the heart of the social whirl. Mary read extracts from diaries Pearl kept, from before her marriage to Lord Montagu in 1920, up to 1996. Following Lord Montagu's death, Pearl married Ned Pleydell-Bouverie in 1936. A rich tapestry of photographs were presented by Ken Robinson of which the following is a selection.



Pearl's portrait 1920



John Montagu and Pearl Crake marry at St Margaret's, Westminster in 1920



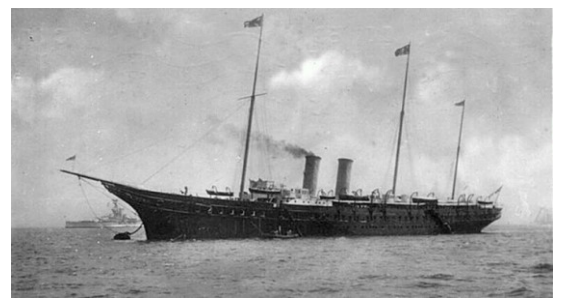
Pearl's diary frontispiece, before and after marriage to John Montagu in 1920



John and Pearl aboard their boat Cygnet of Beaulieu, before leaving for Cowes



Cygnet of Beaulieu with Pearl at the helm, 1922



The Royal Yacht Victoria and Albert, on which John and Pearl dined as guests of King George and Queen Mary. In later years commanded by Pearl's second husband, Ned



John teaching Pearl to sail – a cold day off Bignalls in April 1926



Queen Mary visits Buckler's Hard, Palace House and the New Forest in 1928



Pearl's portrait in the 1930s



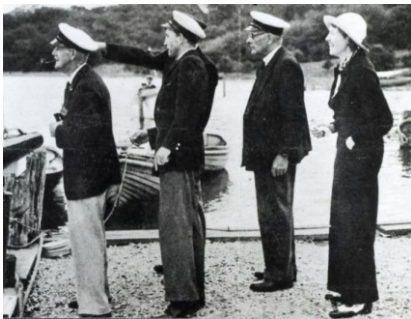
Pearl's litter picking campaign in 1930



Pearl racing with Sir Francis Dent in Mischief, Cowes 1930



A Beaulieu River Sailing Club race off Buckler's Hard in 1931, the Club's foundation year



BRSC race officers, with Pearl and Ned (second from left)



Pearl in oilskins aboard Moti after sailing on Beaulieu River, 1932



"Little Lord Montagu" presents Pearl with a prize after a BRSC race in 1931



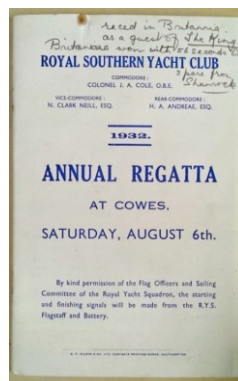
Sailing with Sir Francis Dent in 1934



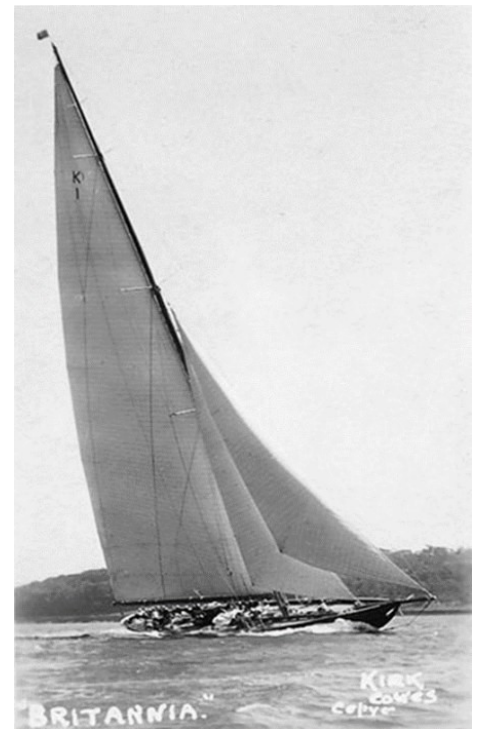
King George V at the helm of his racing yacht Britannia



The King welcomes guests aboard before a race



Pearl's annotated race programme from 1932 when she raced aboard the King's yacht Britannia



Britannia with a new Bermudan rig in 1935



Pearl's marriage to Ned Pleydell-Bouverie in 1936



Pearl and Ned with Edward, Elizabeth and Caroline in 1936



Pearl at the Beaulieu River Sailing Club Regatta in 1937



The family in 1939, just before the outbreak of WWII



The family back together after the war



Enjoying life afloat in 1955



Pearl at a Beaulieu River Sailing Club rally in the 1970s



Pearl at the BRSC 50th Anniversary Party in 1982



Pearl at her 100th birthday party in 1995, with Mary Montagu and Belinda, Lady Montagu

Photographs © Beaulieu Estate

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