



# BEAULIEU HISTORY SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

No. 30 October 2016

## Editor's Column

### Past Meetings

On 9th September the society made a **Visit to Newtown Park** near Lymington.

The talk, focusing on the early history of the estate from medieval times, was given by Richard Reeves. Richard's exhaustive approach to historic research and consummate knowledge of the New Forest threw up an almost continuous record of the holders of this estate from the 13th century.

### Forthcoming Meetings

Scheduled for 4th November is a talk on the **Beaulieu River Sailing Club** to be followed by supper.

Founded in 1931, the club has brought together local residents to



A sailing club regatta off Buckler's Hard in 1931

sail on the river, often over many generations. Andrew Duncan, a member since the 1960s, takes a look at Beaulieu through some of the club's earliest and most notable characters.

### Older Houses of Beaulieu

The history society has published a book documenting the talks on the houses of Beaulieu given to the society over the years. The history of several houses stretches back to medieval times and a number of interesting people have lived in them. The chapters were written by

those who gave the talks, the whole has been collated by John Coles who had the original idea, and the book published by Gillian and Ian Strathcarron - all are due many thanks.

Copies will be available at future meetings at £10 and can be obtained by post from society secretary Gillian Strathcarron at £12.50 including P&P. See inset box at bottom right.

### Francis Chichester

This year is the 50th anniversary of Sir Francis Chichester's single-handed circumnavigation of the world in his yacht Gipsy Moth IV.

The home port from which Francis made this voyage in 1966 was Buckler's Hard on the Beaulieu River. From 1972, Gipsy Moth IV was on display beside the Cutty Sark at Greenwich, but has in recent years been restored by a trust and is sailing again. This summer she returned to Buckler's Hard for a short period and was viewed by many.



Gipsy Moth IV restored sailing in the Solent

Now, local resident Ian Strathcarron is publishing a biography of Sir Francis; the first for 40 years. In the book Ian draws out aspects of the sailor we may never have known. An article on page 2 describes Ian's authorship.

John Pemberton

## Contents

	Page
Editor's Column	1
Francis Chichester Revisited	2
Beaulieu Memorials	4

## Dates for your Diary

Friday 4 November 2016 6:30pm  
**Beaulieu River Sailing Club**  
a talk by Andrew Duncan  
followed by supper  
at Royal Southampton Yacht Club,  
Gins Clubhouse, Beaulieu

UNFORTUNATELY THIS EVENT  
IS NOW FULLY BOOKED

## 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 your surname and what is being paid (membership, book, name of event), otherwise we may not know what the payment is for.

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

## Francis Chichester Revisited

Ian Strathcarron, who lives in Beaulieu, has produced a new biography of Sir Francis Chichester, most famous for single-handedly sailing around the world although he was an accomplished aviator before this. I spoke with Ian to find out more about his authorship.

Ian's approach to biography is different. In those he has written, including histories of Lord Byron and Mark Twain, he has many times travelled to the countries in which the people lived, followed the routes they took on their journeys, and met people or descendants of people that knew them. In the books he writes both of the subject of the biography and the experience he has gone through to follow them.

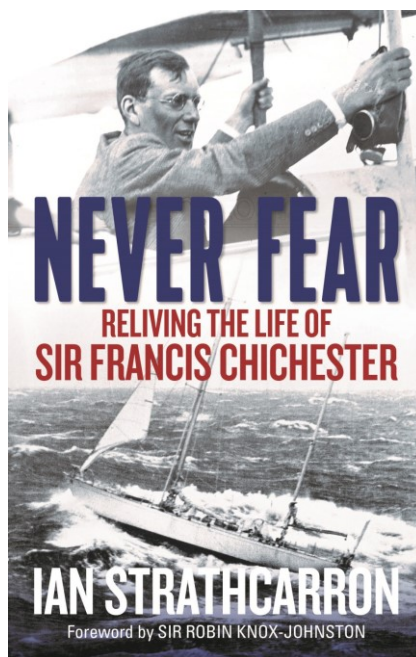
Francis was born in 1901 and left England for New Zealand aged 18 with £10 in his pocket. He returned 10 years later in 1929 having made a fortune, and then decided he wanted to fly back to New Zealand. He purchased a biplane called a Gipsy Moth from the de Havilland Aircraft Company.



Francis and the Gipsy Moth biplane he flew from London to Sydney, Australia in 1929

The following year, he became one of the first aviators to make the flight from London to Sydney. The year after arriving in Sydney, Francis had the plane transported to New Zealand, added floats to it, and became the first solo flyer to cross the Tasman Sea from New Zealand back to Australia.

Ian spent time in New Zealand visiting where Francis lived and, also



being a pilot, took a flight in a biplane to follow part of Francis' historic route to Australia. Ian's aircraft had modern navigation aids, but Francis' did not. When Francis flew across the Tasman Sea in his frail wooden aircraft, he had to find tiny islands at which he could refuel and rest. He performed the feat using sea charts and a sextant sighted on the sun. His accuracy was consummate, and he was celebrated as an innovator in navigation at the time. Failure would almost inevitably have cost him his life.



Francis' and his biplane, now with floats, having arrived in Australia from New Zealand in 1931

Although Ian acknowledges Francis was an accomplished adventurer, he sees his real talent not as a flyer or sailor, but as an inspired navigator.

In 1938 Francis came back from New Zealand to UK and, with World War II looming, offered his services to the Royal Air Force as a pilot. They said at age 37 he was too old and his eyesight was not good enough; which angered him greatly. He tried again twice but only managed to get taken on as a navigator.

Something unknown that Ian has unearthed is that Francis went on secret missions for the Royal Air Force Coastal Command towards the end of World War II. Officially he was based in London, but actually he spent much of his time in Liverpool and Northern Ireland undertaking convoy patrols in the Atlantic in long-distance converted bombers; the B-17 Flying Fortress and B-24 Liberator. His role was to perfect navigation techniques for these aircraft, and teach them to other navigators.

After World War II, Francis remained in England. Although his connection to Beaulieu was strong, he never lived in the area; he lived in London. His connection was through the Honourable Anne Montagu, a sister of Edward, Lord Montagu of Beaulieu. Her second husband was Sir John Chichester, and Francis Chichester was Sir John's first cousin. This brought Francis to Beaulieu and he became a friend of the Montagu family, especially Edward Montagu and his first wife Lady Belinda, and visited many times. Thus he came to moor his yachts, all named Gipsy Moth after his biplane, in the Beaulieu River at Buckler's Hard. It became his home port.

continued ...

... continued

Francis only took to the water when he was 53 years' old and set out on his single-handed round-the-world voyage in 1966 at age 65.



He had a number of physical complaints appropriate to his age, the most serious being that he had recently recovered from lung cancer.

Gipsy Moth IV, in which Francis performed his voyage, was built in the acclaimed Camper & Nicholsons boatyard in Portsmouth and paid for by a wealthy cousin who wished to spare no expense. But



Francis on Gipsy Moth IV in the Beaulieu River before leaving for the round-the-world voyage

this did not end up with the most efficient yacht for Francis' purpose of circumnavigating the globe. As he sailed across some of the most challenging seas in the world, he had a number of difficulties with the yacht, including successive problems that needed correction during his stopover in Sydney: rebuilding the self-steering mechanism, replacing winches that seized, fixing leaks through the deck, and reshaping the hull by adding a section to the keel.



Gipsy Moth IV photographed with only a jib sail in high seas rounding Cape Horn

It was against this adversity that Francis succeeded in his mission. Indeed, the performance of Gipsy Moth IV made it probably the least favourite of his racing yachts. The position of favourite was reserved for Gipsy Moth III in which he won the first single-handed trans-Atlantic race in 1960.

Ian admires the pioneering spirit in Francis, and Ian has been an adventurer too, spending ten years of his life in the Far East working for Time-Life as a freelance journalist and copywriter. He has founded a company manufacturing sports racing cars, travelled extensively and spent a long time sailing yachts



Francis working the winches on Gipsy Moth IV

in different parts of the world, including sailing in Francis Chichester's Gipsy Moth III in Greece and Gipsy Moth IV in Cowes.

In Ian's view, there are two sides to Francis. When he undertook his major voyages, both as an aviator and a sailor, there was a great deal of publicity. He hated it; he just wanted to be left alone. He could not stand the media, who he called "hooligans" and he disliked all the "fuss".

When Francis was on a record-breaking attempt, he was a totally devoted to the mission. He could be curt to people and was focussed to an extraordinary degree on accomplishing his goals; pushing himself to ridiculous levels of physical and mental stress.



Returning to Plymouth at the end of the round-the-world voyage

When not under stress, he was charming, easy-going, humorous, and good company. Ian thinks him a remarkable man but not someone who was particularly sympathetic, unlike say, Mark Twain, about whom Ian chose to write three volumes of biography.

John Pemberton

**References**

Francis Chichester's autobiography, *The Lonely Sea and the Sky*, Hodder and Stoughton 1964

Ian Strathcarron's biography, *Never Fear: Reliving the Life of Sir Francis Chichester* is published by the Unicorn Publishing Group in October 2016. (Copies can be obtained from Unicorn [www.unicornpress.org](http://www.unicornpress.org) or Amazon [www.amazon.co.uk](http://www.amazon.co.uk))

## Beaulieu Memorials

A book by local historians deserves special mention because of the poignant stories it reveals of men of Beaulieu who surrendered their lives in the two Great Wars.

The first to lose his life in World War I was **Stanton Wilmot-Sitwell**, Royal Marine and son of Francis and Mary Wilmot-Sitwell who first lived at Harford Lodge but then at Monkswell. Stanton died in action on the slopes of Achi Baba on 13 July 1915 during the ill-fated Gallipoli campaign, ten days before his nineteenth birthday.

With the failure of the Gallipoli campaign the pressure on Russia from Turkey, as well as Germany, remained. Lord Kitchener was sent on a diplomatic visit to Russia. He sailed on the armoured cruiser Hampshire on 5th June 1916. Just hours later she was struck by a mine and sunk. All hands were drowned including Kitchener and Beaulieu's **Tom Lowe**. Tom, had been a Royal Navy Stoker Petty Officer whose parents lived at Park Cottage, Beaulieu. He was 29 when he died.

**Corporal Samson 'Sam' Holman**, fought with the 2nd Hampshire's at Gallipoli. He was a professional soldier who joined the army in 1911 at the age of 16. His parents lived in the High Street next door to Hayward Butcher's shop, his father being the village roofer. Sam was a veteran of Gallipoli where he was wounded. He rejoined his battalion and was in France by 1916. He lost his life during a raid on the German position near Braumont Hamel during the battle of the Somme. He was 21. His body was never found.

**Second Lieutenant Tom Slater**, whose parents lived at Ferny Croft also died during the battle of the



Authors John Cockram and Richard Williams, supported by Ralph Montagu, Peter Melhuish, Robert Gayner and the late Christopher ('Bunter') Steel, have produced *The War Memorial at Beaulieu*. The names of ten men are recorded on the memorial at Beaulieu Abbey church.

Somme, aged 21. His army record detailed 'in accordance with the decision of the Army Council the Death of this Officer is accepted as having occurred on or since 26th September 1916'. He has no known grave. Sergeant Herb later wrote to his father, William Slater, that Tom 'met his fate like an Englishman'.

While the French battled the wrath of the Germans at Verdun the British mounted an offensive in 1917 in the Ypres Salient at Vimy Ridge. Here, **Albert 'Bert' Loseby**, a private with the 1st Battalion Hertfordshire Regiment, whose family lived at Whitehouse Cottages Sowley, lost his life on 12 January 1917, aged 28. He was buried in Vlamertinghe Military Cemetery in Belgium.

At sea, the British navy continued to enforce the blockade of Germany. **Philip Armstrong** sub-lieutenant, Royal Navy had been in the battle of Jutland but by 1917 he was a submariner. On 27th December 1917, his G class submarine left her depot for a patrol off the German coast. The last time she was heard from was on 3 January 1918. The subsequent Admiralty report inferred a mine sank her. He was the only son of Commander and Mrs Armstrong (later Lord and Lady Armstrong) who built Oxleys on Dock Lane. Philip was only 20 years old.

The last three local soldiers died in 1918 during the German onslaught on the Allies western lines. **John Malcolm** who was born at Cobb farm, was a machine gun operator. Serving as part of the 5th Army, John was killed during fierce fighting on 22 March 1918, aged 19. His body was never found.

About the same time **Harry Cram**, born in 1885 in 1 Sturt Cottages Exbury, was also killed. The date is recorded on his death certificate as between 21 and 31 March 1918. His body was never found.

The last man to die in 1918 was **Albert Smith** who lived at Kings Hat Cottage, son of a forrester. He died on 5 or 6 April near Arras aged 21. He was buried in the Bucquoy Road Cemetery, Ficheux.

Christina Dykes

### References

Cockram, John and Williams, Richard, *The War Memorial at Beaulieu*, published by the authors in aid of The Royal Legion Poppy Appeal, 2007 (Copies can be obtained from John Cockram, Robin Cottages, Sway Road, Brockenhurst, Hants SO42 7RX)

### Committee Members

**Emma Page** (Chair) emma.page@lepe.org.uk  
**Peter Marling-Roberts** (Treasurer) pmarlingroberts@hotmail.co.uk  
**Christina Dykes** (Events) christina@exalon.net  
**John Pemberton** (Newsletter) johnlpemberton@compuserve.com  
**Mary Montagu-Scott** mary.montaguscott@gravelly.com

**Anne Coles** anne@johncoles.plus.com  
**Ken Robinson** krobinsonlirt@gmail.com  
**Gillian Strathcarron** (Secretary) gillian.s@mac.com  
 whose details for contact are: 01590 612334  
 Otterwood House, Exbury Road, Beaulieu SO42 7YS