BEAULIEU HISTORY SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

No. 44 May 2024

Editor's Column

Recent Meetings

On 27 November 2023, Marc Heighway gave a talk on the **Needs Oar Point Airfield**. This little-known World War II temporary airfield was close to Buckler's Hard, had 1,000 personnel and 100 fighter bombers, made a significant contribution to the D-Day military operation in France, but surprisingly was only in operation for three months.

29 April 2024 saw a talk on **Lumberjills** by Joanna Foat, the fascinating story of the Women's Timber Corps who took the place of men fighting in the Second World War and helped harvest trees in the New Forest to maintain the supply of timber and support the war effort. Joanna has recorded the story in a book, *Lumberjills: Britain's Forgotten Army*. See also on page 2 a newspaper article focussing on the Lumberjills work locally.

Nick Saunders on 20 May 2024 told the story of the **Indian Army in the New Forest**. Soldiers from India, part then of the British Empire, fought in World War I alongside the British in the trenches of France and Belgium. Many who were wounded, ill or needing convalescence were welcomed in hospital and recovery facilities in the New Forest.

Forthcoming Meetings

On 5 July 2024 Paul Manning will present **Falconry—One Thousand Years in the New Forest**; the long history of hunting with birds of prey from the the founding of the New Forest as the first royal hunting ground by William the Conqueror in 1079, through the rich history of the centuries which followed, up to modern times. Paul will display birds of prey in the Abbey cloisters if conditions permit.

Marc Heighway will present **Beaulieu River at War** on 26 September 2024. In the year of the 80th Anniversary of D-Day, the talk will illustrate the contribution the historic shipbuilding yard Buckler's Hard, and Beaulieu River in general, made to the construction of a wide range of vessels used in naval operations on D-Day and throughout World War II.

On 24 October 2024 **The History of Hurst Castle** will be given by Roger Walker, Chairman of the Friends of Hurst Castle. The castle was built in 1544 by Henry VIII as part of a chain of artillery fortresses protecting southern England. It guarded the Needles Passage leading to the Solent, the port of Southampton and the naval base at Portsmouth. The castle has outlived turbulent times, but is now facing the challenge of incursion by the sea. In February 2021 a section of the castle collapsed following a storm surge.

John Pemberton

Contents

Dates for your Diary

5 July 2024 6:30pm
Falconry—One Thousand Years in the New Forest
presented by Paul Manning
at Domus Hall, Beaulieu Abbey

26 September 2024 6:30pm
Beaulieu River at War
presented by Marc Heighway
at Beaulieu Village Hall

24 October 2024 6:30pm
History of Hurst Castle
presented by Roger Walker
at Beaulieu Village Hall

Membership

Membership fees of £5 per member are due at the start of the calendar year. If you have not yet paid, you are encouraged to login to the website (as given below), select menu item Membership and Renew Membership. Payments can be made by debit/credit card and PayPal.

To become a member, select Membership and Join the Society. Enter your name and email details and pay the £5 membership fee.

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.

Courage and Sacrifice in Service

With the 80th anniversary of D-Day this year as we look back at the sacrifices made, it's important to recognise the often overlooked contributions of Black and Asian troops who played vital roles in the assault.

Among them were Black American troops stationed in the New Forest in the lead-up to D-Day. One memorable story recorded by the New Forest Remembers Project of 2013 relates to the landlord of the Royal Oak pub at Hilltop, Beaulieu. He threw White American airmen out of the establishment after they had prevented Black servicemen from remaining. Incredibly, Black and White US Army units were segregated during wartime, and this would have been witnessed locally. The majority of Black Americans worked in logistics and support, so it is unlikely that any left the New Forest on D-Day in combat roles. However, some were photographed in Brockenhurst in July 1944 probably en-route to France.

Robert Watkins, Buck Northington and Albert Williams with local people Brockenhurst, July 1944

It was a very different story in the Royal Air Force. During the Second World War, many nationalities flew in combat for the RAF including Black Caribbean men.

Among these unsung heroes is the tale of Htin Yain Lao, a young man whose journey epitomises the courage, determination, and resilience of so many. He was born in Burma (now Myanmar), a land as far removed from the New Forest heathland and villages as one could imagine.

He joined the Burmese Volunteer Air Force in November 1940 along with four other ex-college students. After Japan invaded their homeland, the four of them came to Britain and volunteered to serve in the RAF. Lao and a fellow Burmese pilot, Selvyn Khin, were eventually drafted into 257 Squadron and trained to fly Hawker Typhoon fighter bombers. In April 1944, four RAF squadrons, including 257 with Lao and Khin, were posted to a temporary airfield named RAF Needs Oar Point, just south of Buckler's Hard and to the west of the Beaulieu River. It was from here they would fly operations over northern France, tasked with softening up targets before the D-Day invasion. This included attacking railway junctions, viaducts, and V1 rocket sites that were under construction.

It didn't come without a cost. Through April, May, and June of 1944, thirteen pilots from Needs Oar Point were killed in action whilst supporting the lead-up to D-Day and the days afterwards. Three were also taken as prisoners of war after crash-landing in France. Thankfully Lao and Khin were not amongst these casualties. In fact, during this period, Lao married an English girl in the New Forest.

In July, the pilots of 257 Squadron left England for advanced landing grounds in France and continued to support the Allied invasion. Lao flew in combat whilst his new wife remained in England.

Tragically Lao was killed on 20 January 1945 when his Typhoon was lost in a snowstorm south-west of Utrecht. He is buried in Dordrecht General Cemetery in the Netherlands, over five thousand miles from his ancestral home.

But perhaps the saddest postscript to this story is how the wife Lao, married in the New Forest just weeks before D-Day, was pregnant at the time of his death. The baby was born four months later and named David. The boy never got to meet his father; a brave young man from Burma, who came to England, flew from the Forest, and ultimately sacrificed his life for others.

Lao's story, and the stories of others who served in the New Forest during wartime, underscore the universal spirit of valour that transcended borders and backgrounds in the lead-up to D-Day and beyond.

Marc Heighway

Lumberjills in New Forest

Following the talk in April 2024 on the Lumberjills, here is a report from a local paper of their activity in the New Forest.

Remembering the Lumberjills

Jon Waller

14 May 2022

THEY were the lumberjills: members of the Women's Timber Corps launched 80 years ago which sent hundreds to work in the New Forest during the Second World War.

A stereotype-busting female unit of the Home Front, they were part of the Women's Land Army and made up of between 15,000 and 18,000 pioneering women aged 17-24 who left home to fell trees with axes and saws.

The story of the New Forest lumberjills was revealed by Joanna Foat in her book *Lumberjills: Britain's Forgotten Army*.

The Denny Sawmills team

Their office was based at Red Lodge in Lyndhurst and their work in the district produced 12.5-million cubic feet of timber.

Britain was the largest worldwide timber importer but war meant home-grown timber supplies became vital for producing pit props, railway sleepers, telegraph poles, gun butts, ships and aircraft, as well as packaging boxes for bombs and army supplies.

Thousands of forestry workers were urgently required and in April 1942 four training camps across the UK taught women felling, haulage, sawmilling and measuring timber, before the workers were sent out to the UK's woodland.

Diana Underwood, a lumberjill who worked in the New Forest, recalled how sometimes they cycled 20 miles to and from work a day.

She said: "Workmen were building an airfield for the Americans at Stoney Cross and they were able to pay more for digs so we were unable to get in anywhere for the recommended £1 a week and usually had to pay 25/-, sometimes 30/-.

"I must have stayed with 10 or 12 families, mainly in Lyndhurst, Ringwood and Brockenhurst."

Orientation was made more difficult because, in anticipation of a German invasion, all signposts had been taken down in the New Forest. Getting lost was a daily hazard and the lumberjills came to rely on compasses.

Another of the lumberjills was Barbara Beddow who was promoted to forewoman and put in charge of a special New Forest project to extract a highly valuable shrub used by the military to make high explosives.

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While working in the New Forest lumberjills had to move and find new billets as often as three times a week, which created problems with laundry, boot repairs and keeping up with the mail, which often arrived weeks late.

Alice Moffatt, The Women's Timber Corps on the Isle of Wight

By the end of the conflict 26 sawmills had been set up within the district in which lumberjills worked alongside men, including Italian prisoners of war.

They also did charcoal burning, something the PoWs could not help with as the charcoal was used in munitions, and helped the Forestry Commission plant thousands of new trees and collect and bag up pine cones for seed.

Author Joanna said: “I was shocked to discover how the women were treated at the beginning of the war.

“They were laughed at for their enthusiasm to offer their services, regarded as ornamental rather than useful, and many timber merchants did not want women taking over the jobs of skilled men.

“In fact, the Lumberjills not only pioneered a new fashion for women in trousers, wearing jodphurs, but they also proved women could carry logs like weightlifters, work in dangerous sawmills, drive huge timber trucks and calculate timber production figures on which the government depended during wartime.

“Out in the forests away from the restrictions imposed on women by society, they realised they could sit astride a tree, smoke a pipe and fell 10-tonne trees just like the men, if they wanted to.”

At the end of the war the Women’s Timber Corps received no recognition, grants or gratuities and were not allowed to keep their uniforms or attend Remembrance Day parades since they were not part of the fighting forces.

More than 60 years later, then prime minister Gordon Brown finally presented them with a badge.

Although to their disappointment the badge bore a wheatsheaf – the emblem of the Women’s Land Army, not a pine tree or a pair of crossed axes.

Joanna added: “Many of the lumberjills I met were still upset that they remained a footnote to the Women’s Land Army, so I wanted to make sure they were remembered in history.

“Now their incredible feats of physical and mental endurance inspire women today, especially female forestry workers and arborists from across the world.

“Given the freedom and opportunity to work together in sisterhood out in the forest, naturally the lumberjills were a huge success.”

Memories of Fred Norris

This article, reproduced from Newsletter No. 20 April 2013, gives a deep insight into life in Beaulieu village in bygone times

A lifelong resident of Beaulieu village died recently. Here his nephew Anthony Norris remembers him.

Frederick Robert Norris, 'Fred', was born on 26th August 1916, in the house in the High Street, the Saddlery, where he was to live most of his life; the son of the village Saddler and the Parish Nurse, and his aunt was the village Postmistress. He had a twin sister, Dorothy, and younger brother and sister, Stanley and Phyllis.

Winnie (cousin), Fred, Dorothy, Stan and Phyllis

The Norris family had been tenants of the Saddlery in the High Street since 1871. At that time, all the farms had horses, and there was consequently a steady demand for harness and all the associated parts. Fred's father was a master saddler with a workshop making and repairing boots, shoes as well as harnesses and saddlery.

In 1922 after the two Miss Burdens left the Beaulieu mill, Fred's father took over its running using the wheel to make animal feed from the grain of the estate's 27 farms, as well as retaining the saddlery and shoe repair business in the High St.

In a small family business or farm, as a child you had chores to do before school. There were animals to be fed, coppers to be lit, water to be drawn, the whole property only had one cold water tap, and kale and kindling to be cut. Fred did all these things in the morning before going to Beaulieu School. After leaving Beaulieu school he went to Brockenhurst Grammar School, but left at the age of 15 years to join the family business. He started out in his father's workshop making and repairing boots and shoes and would accompany his father going out to the farms fitting horse collars.

The village he was born into was different from the Beaulieu of today; most transport was horse drawn, there were some steam lorries about; you would go miles before seeing a motor car, and sailing barges were still bringing goods up the Beaulieu River. A lot of the roads were still gravel; he could remember the tarmacking of Beaulieu High Street, and one thing that stuck in his mind was the state of the poor horse pulling the pot of boiling tar, all its hair had been singed off by the heat.

Early Tasks

One of the early tasks his father set him, was to accompany Jack Hendy to Warren Farm to shoot a rogue horned Guernsey Bull that had gored its owner to death. It involved a shot gun, two cartridges, a pint of beer, and a cabbage. He would relate, as a small boy, how he watched Jack, who literally was an old soldier, quickly load the gun, pour the pint of beer down his throat, to steady the trigger finger, and shoot, firstly, between the eyes and rapidly a second behind the ear. Old Jack was really good at it, he said, and the bull fell down dead. After a pause I asked Fred……What about the cabbage? Oh - the cabbage that was for me, I had to get in front of the bull and distract him with the cabbage.

Fred's father also dealt in game and the time around Christmas was very busy. It was a special time at the mill, where the corn room at the back was used for plucking an array of different birds: turkeys, partridges, pigeons, geese, pheasants and chicken. Often, as Christmas approached, there would be a surplus of birds and they were disposed of by having a gaming night in the mill.

Fred at the wedding of Ralph and Ailsa Montagu

This became a highlight in the village at Christmas. Fred was sent off to buy the largest stag turkey available for as little money as possible and this became the first prize in the raffle, the tickets for which Fred and Stan had to sell around the village. There was also a game for up to 21 people involving 3 shakes of a dice; whoever had the highest number won a goose. At the end of the proceedings, a hogshead of beer was opened; unfortunately the police stopped all these activities after the war as it broke both licensing and gaming regulations!

A picture hangs in Palace House, Lord Montagu's family home, called 'Christmas Preparations at Beaulieu' by Charles Cundall, and depicts Fred's father and his faithful lieutenant, Jack Hendy, plucking geese. Fred told us he could remember the day this picture was painted. He said what the picture does not show was that, in the corner of the room, in the mill yard were two small boys: him and his brother Stanley.

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His father and Jack worked fast and threw the roughly plucked birds at the two boys who were to catch them in their laps and finish off the rough plucking. Woe betide them, Fred said, if they did not keep up; Fred's father's temper could be short!

Fred's father would talk about the poverty in the area at this time. There were some families in the area that could not afford shoes for the children, as cobblers this gave them problems. Then, if you were a farm worker and you were not fit for work you lost your job and your tied cottage; you were homeless and penniless. There was no benefit system.

In the village in those days there was a Poor House; the building still stands. Fred would relate how one Christmas Eve his father gave him a dressed out cock-bird, surplus to requirements, and said take this down to Old Veal. Fred went to the Poor House which he said was a terrible old place. He knocked on Old Veal's door and remembered the size of the crack under the door through which the draught moaned. The door was answered by an old man and his wife, holding a lit candle stump. He duly handed over the chicken. As a young boy I think this image and experience stuck with him and determined him to always try and help his fellow man.

Transport

Whilst still at school he would be expected to take the horse-cart out and deliver feeding stuffs. This was mostly uneventful apart from one occasion in East Boldre when going past Matthew's Shop, the horse decided to bolt. Fred was lucky, because he was spotted by the landlady of the Turfcutters, and despite having a wooden leg, she ran out into the road and grabbed the horse's head and averted a disaster. Fred didn't tell his father!

Much of the feed came in by barges run by Williams of Southampton: seed oats and potatoes from Scotland, bran and maize from South Africa, and pig food from Argentina. Once the consignment had been man-handled into the mill, the young Fred and Stan would ride downstream with the barge to the Bailey's Hard and then walk back to Beaulieu.

Within ten years, they had joined their father in the business. One cannot over-estimate the amount of physical work they had to get through humping sacks, mixing corn and weighing up small quantities for customers – and all in a very dusty environment. And, of course, the rats had to be kept under control!

By the 1930s, road transport had replaced the barges and it became a common sight to see a lorry parked awkwardly alongside the mill, its contents being hauled straight through the high level loading bay.

In those days, bran and beet-pulp arrived in hundredweight sacks and the grain from the manor farms in 1½ or even 2¼ hundredweight sacks [1 hundredweight = 112 lb = 50 kg, *Ed*]. Balancing these on the centre of your back is quite an art, but there was no other way to do it.

The mill

Between the wars Fred remembered the mill wheel being in use. Using the wheel wasn't always straightforward; first you needed a pond full of water, combined with an outgoing or low tide on the other side, so controlling the sluices was all part of the job. The spring tides brought their own problems as the feed stocks on the ground floor of the mill had to be moved rapidly or risk being waterlogged.

Most of the milling took place at harvest time. Once the wheels started turning, Fred told me that the sound of the mechanism, the splash of the water, the smell and scent of grinding barley all combined to make the building sing – and when the sun shone through and you saw the drops coming off the mill wheel, it was a wonderful sight.

They could grind 2-3 hundredweights an hour, for up to 8 hours, by which time the tide would be coming in again, but then there was the chance of more grinding – possibly at night – on the second tide. This might be barleymeal, wheat, maize, bran or oats.

But as time went on, the old building started to creak and shudder, so they decided to stop before any damage was done. Fred told me that the last time it worked was in 1945. A local man, Admiral Hall, decided to grow an acre of wheat and after it was harvested he brought it to the mill for grinding. Fred ground it as finely as he could and then the flour was taken to Winseys, the baker in the high street. Fred remembered that the resulting bread was, and I quote, "blinkin' horrible!" This was, after all, a mill designed for animal feed!

The war

The Second World War came along and although Fred trained in the artillery, he was in fact in a reserved occupation. He was very much involved with the WARAG, dispersing wheat stocks and requisitioning buildings for storage, like the front room of the Curtle House. He joined the Home Guard which saw little hostile action. He said one of the best things about being in it was the supper parties that were held in the mill yard!

During the war at a dance in New Milton he met Violet Rickman; they married at St Thomas's Lymington and moved into the Mill House in Beaulieu, later moving up the road to the house behind the Shop where they were to remain, his wife, Rickie, running the hardware shop.

After the war, Fred was re-joined by his brother Stanley and after their father died in January 1948, they took over and continued to develop the feed business in the Mill, though now the wheel had ceased to grind and the building effectively became a warehouse.

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The business flourished with Fred doing deliveries and farm visits, collecting orders and giving invaluable advice to the farmers and -holders, while Stan oversaw the unloading of the lorries and serving the customers at the Mill.

Times were now changing, the size of lorries which one would see parked outside the mill increasing, and the quantity of traffic using the road by the mill likewise. A lorry carrying twenty tons of beet-pulp would take some two and a half hours to unload, and would cause long traffic jams. The Mill was becoming unsuitable as a warehouse and in 1975 the business moved to Home Farm. It was the right decision though a very sad one for Fred, as he had spent most of his working life at the Mill.

As farms had amalgamated in the post war years, feed deliveries were gradually taken over by the main suppliers, albeit with Norris & Sons as the agent. Fred greatly regretted the loss of the old rural community with all the smallholdings he knew as a younger man, but the rise of horse keeping provided an important new income stream. It was also a reason to continue delivering small feed consignments. This was one of Fred's favourite jobs, as getting around the area he knew so well, and seeing his regular customers gave him enormous pleasure. He was still lifting ½ hundredweight bags well into his nineties.

Involved in everything

Throughout Fred's life he was involved in everything that went on in the village. As a choir boy he was able to recall the time of the Rev. Powles when the church organ was pumped by hand. He later became Church Warden, a post he held for seventeen years, and in recent years an acolyte at the morning service.

His interest and knowledge of farming led to him reforming, in the sixties, the Beaulieu and District Young Farmers Club. He derived tremendous pleasure from this, teaching the youngsters all aspects of farming and country skills, organising public speaking and stock judging teams and taking these teams to competitions at National Level even driving the mini-bus himself!

Fred planting a tree to commemorate Ralph Montagu's 21st birthday

Fred's interest in agriculture was fostered by Beaulieu Growmore Club set up during the war to, obviously, grow more, and it lasting well into the 1970s. This was done by ploughing matches and arable and animal competitions. He was not a big farmer but did make hay and was quite good at it, usually taking the prize for best meadow hay. He was Chairman on one occasion of this organisation and hosted the Annual Dinner at the Domus. That year Lord Montagu had arranged for Lord Goodman to speak. On being introduced, Fred was asked by his lordship what he was going to speak about; Fred told him. At the dinner Lord Goodman was to speak first; he did brilliantly, delivering Fred's speech and leaving him, literally, speechless !

Public engagement

Fred's first public engagement had been, at the age of four, to present Lord Montagu's mother with flowers when she arrived here in 1920. Eighty five years later, in 2005, one of his final duties was to make the presentation of the tenants' wedding present to Ralph and Ailsa. Fred's life was devoted to the service of everyone and represented a particularly long and consistent strand in the fabric of our village, interwoven as it was with the many people he came into contact with. As a child, he would have sat on the knee and listened to people born in the mid-19th century. As a nonagenarian, he would have talked to children who might live until the start of the 22nd century – that's quite a span. And then there are those of us in-between; taking all these generations together, he touched a great many lives.

Fred continued working in the business until he was 95. He put in a good five days a week and was first to arrive in the morning; sickness was not an excuse not to come to work! On retirement at ninety-five he decided he would buy some cattle and get himself a computer. But sadly he was unable to take advantage of a retirement and a well-earned rest, and passed away peacefully on the twelfth day of Christmas, January 6th 2013.

Anthony Norris

Susan Campbell obituary

Local resident Susan Campbell lived a full and diverse life. This obituary is reproduced from *The Telegraph*.

Susan Campbell, writer and illustrator who reignited interest in historic walled gardens

She studied at the Slade, illustrated Nell Dunn's Battersea story Up the Junction, and wrote food books and many works on gardens

15 January 2024

Susan Campbell, who has died aged 92, had a long and varied career as an artist and illustrator, a food writer and Britain's leading expert on walled kitchen gardens, 700 of which she visited in the UK and abroad.

Susan Jennifer Benson was born in Ruislip on September 14 1931, the daughter of Herbert Benson and the former Agnes Groner. Her family was originally from Bavaria, where her paternal grandfather was a merchant in cycle parts and accessories and her maternal grandmother was the daughter of a well-off furrier. They were naturalised in Britain in 1903 and later took the name of Benson – as Susan put it, "to get into the golf club". Her father imported fancy goods from Germany and Japan.

She was one of 80 pupils at Chilterns School, Monks Risborough, Bucks, run by John Brophy, father of Brigid Brophy. She then studied painting and drawing at the Byam Shaw School in Kensington, becoming a friend of Belinda Crossley (later Lady Montagu of Beaulieu).

After three years she "blagged my way" into the Slade School of Fine Art, earning a first class diploma in fine art, drawing, painting and etching. This was the golden era of the Slade, which was undergoing a renaissance under the inspirational direction of Professor William Coldstream, the art critic David Sylvester and the gallerist Helen Lessore.

A mere five years after the war, Blitz damage was still evident in London and the art school operated from the north wing of the quad of University College. Susan lodged in a house of Slade students, her bedroom containing the coke stove that heated the building – her was mother horrified to see her open sugar bowl covered with dust and ashes and her landlord sleeping in a cupboard under the stairs.

She began by drawing from plaster replicas of statues, but enlivened this with judiciously placed pot plants. She soon graduated to painting nude male models, who wore "modesty slips" for the girls.

Rafts of distinguished artists such as Lucian Freud, Graham Sutherland and Stanley Spencer came to talk to the students, who included Euan Uglow (of whom she published a memoir in 2003), Craigie Aitchison ("I thought I'd ended up in paradise") and Michael Andrews ("Nothing could ever be so good again"). In their free time they ate as best they could at Bianchi's in Soho, Jimmy's or Bertorelli's. They danced to New Orleans jazz, and Sylvester and Freud guided Susan and others to the Colony Room in Dean Street.

The writer John Moynihan was soon describing Susan Benson as a "girl in stark flesh-clinging ballet-style-black" being twirled around at a party "with super-animated ferocity by her ecstatic partner" – Mike Andrews, who, between 1958 and 1960, produced an unfinished portrait of her at her home in Noel Road, Islington.

In 1953, after three years at the Slade, she gained a travelling scholarship and the Daily Sketch commissioned her to draw towns and social events such as the Fourth of June at Eton and the Royal Academy Private View. She won two prizes, one of £250 for a drawing of Stamford Bridge stadium and another £50 for etching. This enabled her to live in Sicily for a year, drawing and painting peasant life.

On her return to England in 1954, she concentrated on illustration and drawing, with commissions from The Sunday Times, The Observer, Shell Oil and various magazines. In 1963 she drew sketches for her friend Nell Dunn's Up the Junction which Randolph Churchill judged in The Birmingham Daily Post to "most faithfully reflect" the book's depiction of Battersea life.

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In 1958 Lady Mary Campbell (daughter of the 5th Earl of Rosslyn) sued her husband, Robin Campbell, CBE, DSO, son of Sir Ronald Hugh Campbell (Ambassador to France and Portugal), for adultery ("Girl artist cited") and was granted an uncontested divorce.

The following year, Susan married him. He had been wounded in the ill-fated raid on Rommel's headquarters in Libya in 1941, taken prisoner, and had a leg amputated. As Director of Art at the Arts Council during some of its most productive days, he arranged many international exhibitions. This marriage brought her into the world of people such as Cyril Connolly, Patrick Leigh Fermor, Robert Kee and the ever-tricky author, Julia Strachey. Robin died in 1985.

While bringing up a young family, Susan Campbell turned her attention to cookery books. She collaborated with Caroline Conran, cookery editor of The Sunday Times, on her book, Poor Cook in 1971, which Cyril Connolly described as "a must for families who are beginning to despair of the rising cost of living… Mrs Campbell sweetens our adversity." They collaborated further on Family Cook in 1974, which Lucia van der Post preferred as the dishes were lighter and fresher and could be consumed without guilt.

A portrait by her friend Michael Andrews

Cheap Eats in London (1975) retailed at 50p and was the result of a never-to-be-repeated experience of eating meals for £1, though by the time she had finished this had inflated to £2. By the end of each week she felt "distinctly queasy". Her best find was the Globe Dining Rooms in the Balls Pond Road, where an edible meal could be had for 30p. Other cook books followed, and in 1980 she interviewed the buyers for Harrods marble food halls, judging apple juices, pork pies and food processors.

In 1981 she turned her attention to the history of walled kitchen gardens. This was inspired by a visit to Thomas Pakenham's Tullynally Castle in Ireland, where she found the walled garden intact and operational at a time when many had become derelict.

In 1984 Susan Campbell found a rare, fully functioning kitchen garden at Cottesbrooke Hall for the BBC. In 1987 she published Cottesbrooke, an English Kitchen Garden, which reignited interest in walled kitchen gardens.

For the next 40 years she visited more than 700 such gardens. She published Charleston Kedding (an anagram for kitchen gardens), based on Pylewell Park in 1996, and her most comprehensive book was A History of Kitchen Gardens (2015), with her own illustrations and drawings. She established the Walled Kitchen Garden Network with the late garden historian, Fiona Grant, in 2001, and advised on the restoration of many famous gardens at houses such as Tatton Park, Hampton Court, Fulham Palace and, most recently, Althorp.

Living on the sea shore in the New Forest, she founded the Beaulieu and District Film Club, greatly enjoyed by nautical figures and retired doctors with yachts, which meets regularly at Buckler's Hard.

In 1986 she purchased the previously unknown diary of Dr Robert Darwin, father of Charles Darwin. She spent 35 years researching its background, discovering that his garden at the Mount on the banks of the Severn in Shrewsbury, was the site of many of Charles's early horticultural ventures, and it listed the many plants, both ornamental and exotic, that could be found there. She published this as Dr Darwin's Garden Diary: 1838-1865 in 2021.

Later in life she studied garden and landscape history at the Architectural Association in London, was vice-president of the Garden History Society and in 2023 was awarded the Veitch Memorial Medal of the Royal Horticultural Society for her outstanding contribution to advancing the science and practice of horticulture.

Susan Campbell had been recommended for a well-earned OBE, but sadly this was not approved in time.

In 2012 she married Mike Kleyn, who survives her with her two sons from her marriage to Robin Campbell.

Susan Campbell, born September 14 1931, died January 2 2024