

Anne Chichester's memorial service on 13th March 2015

Address given by Ralph Montagu

The diary of Pearl Montagu, Monday 3rd October 1921: *J. J. [John Junior] turned out to be a daughter which is very sad – but better luck next time and she is a darling. They say she is a very neat little baby, very like John, weighing 7 lb 9 ozs. Baby screamed lustily when she arrived and is very strong... she has a little reddish fair hair and dark blue eyes, and the prettiest little features!*

Anne already had two elder half-sisters, Helen and Elizabeth, but the family which John and Pearl created really had an identity of its own. And in the years that followed, Anne gained a sister, Caroline, a brother, Edward and another sister, Mary Clare.

In her memoirs, Anne recalled just what a wonderful place Beaulieu was to grow up in, the nursery on the first floor being their own little kingdom. Anne and her siblings were looked after by a portly cockney lady called Nanny Champ. A daily walk – often to the village – was very much a part of their routine, and so it was that Anne got to know the people of the parish and what they did. She came to see them as part of her Beaulieu family and much later in life, could still recall them all.

There was Mr Norris in his dusty bowler hat overseeing the mill as it ground animal feed. Mr Wadley at the Electric Light Station with Messers Biddlecombe and Patillo tending the machine with greasy rags in hand. The Marvin family who had the garage and ran the bus to Southampton. Captain Widnell at the Manor Office, his assistant Mr Ashmead and his secretary Dorothy Norris. Mr Stevens who ran the Queensmeade Grocery Stores with his chatty wife. Norris's shop; a treasure trove of hardware and saddlery which had a special aroma. Miss Preston, the village dressmaker, Mr Lewis the clockmaker, Mrs Payne the postmistress, and Miss Crouch the telephone operator. Mr Bailey the Blacksmith working away at his anvil to shoe the local working horses. David Kitcher who presided over the Estate Yard where the carpenters could be seen at work. And the children's favourite shop keeper, Mr Winsey the grocer, who always gave them a chocolate finger!

But there was another circle of people within walking distance – close family friends who were labeled as cousins. These included her godfather, Sir Thomas Troubridge, who lived at Oldways. He would take Anne on treasure hunts in the abbey ruins, looking for pieces of the original tiled floor. There was the eccentric Aimee Cheshire who lived in the flat in the Domus and claimed to be on intimate terms with the monks. And the retired actress Nellie Stuart-Wortley who lived in the cottage by the stables. But most important of all was the old vicar, Daddy Powles, who taught the children divinity and brought them sweets. No wonder they loved him! Always dressed in an oatmeal topcoat, white leather spats and a large grey felt hat, he rang the Angelus every evening, and as the night nursery looked towards the church, Anne would hear that bell as she went to bed.

The Revd Powles used to wear a very distinctive eau de cologne, and one day, long after he had died, Anne caught the smell of it again in Palace House; it was a Wednesday, the same the day that he always used to have lunch with Pearl!

Anne's formal schooling started at age 7 when Pearl engaged her former governess 'Nooie' to teach Anne with a small class of other local children in Palace House. They even had their own netball team! Extracurricular activities included piano lessons, sewing, craft work, wild flower collecting, and amateur dramatics. On one occasion they even had the help of Elizabeth's friend, the famous Shakespearean actress Gwen Ffrangcon-Davies!

There were also special days to look forward to. A travelling fair came to the village each year, and then there was Empire Day, when everyone would march up and down the street with flags, lead by the Beaulieu band. And there were several visits by Queen Mary who always came to the nursery to give Anne and Caroline beautiful pieces of doll's house furniture.

And what of Anne's father? It wasn't often that he took Anne out on her own, which made these occasions all the more special to her. She had a particularly strong memory of an evening in 1926 when he came to say goodnight and his face was black with smuts. He explained that he'd just driven a train down from London – it was the General strike!

In February 1929, John Montagu was admitted to a London clinic for an operation, and unfortunately complications arose. Over the next few weeks, Pearl sent reports back to Beaulieu by telephone, but there was no improvement. It was an early Easter that year. Anne recalled that there was a big egg for her with card saying 'with love from Daddy'. She felt quite sure that her father had been well enough to go off and buy it for her, but in fact he had died on Good Friday. It was Nooie who quietly broke her the news to her on Easter Day.

It was perhaps at this young age (just 7) that Anne learned from her mother how to carry on when one of the most important people in your life has gone. She remembered how people rallied round to help the family, notably Harry and Rachel Forster of Lepe, Lionel de Rothschild, and Tommy and Laura Troubridge. The following February, on Anne's 9th Birthday, Pearl reflected: *How my darling John loved her little bright self – she has such rare intelligence and charm for her age.* And how did this intelligent and charming person spend her days? An insight can be gained from her first diary entry at the age of 11.

1st January 1933

Wrote a Christmas letter

Went to church

Played L'attaque (a military board game)

Lunch

rest

ping pong in hall

made toffee in the school room with Mummy

played 'murder' – most exciting – Granny does not like it

Other entries later that month included:

An attempt at fishing on the Monk's Pond, a party at the Duplessis, a bike ride with Elfrida Widnell, a party and treasure hunt at Mrs Cross, tea at the Montagu Arms, cleaning the hen houses, a party at Longford with the Wessex Wizard, and multiple references to skating and ice hockey on the Mill Dam, Hatchett Pond and Sowley Pond.

There was much for Pearl's children to enjoy at Beaulieu, especially as nobody fussed over them when they went out. Anne considered herself quite athletic and loved doing acrobatics on her bicycle, climbing trees and messing about on the river. There was a small dinghy on the Mill Dam from which she would fish, and a scow moored by the Mill so that she could pop out and sail at any time the tide was right.

Tennis parties were her favourite way of getting together with friends, and the children also had riding lessons with Miss Campbell and Miss Hewlett at Curles Close. Anne rode a grey called Duchess and was thrilled to win a rosette at the Romsey Show.

But in January 1935 her very active lifestyle came to a temporary halt when she developed an unexplained leg pain and high temperature. A specialist from London diagnosed a bone infection called osteo-mye-litis and she was rushed to Lymington hospital for an operation. The recovery process was slow, and she had to remain there for almost 3 months. Even when she was discharged, her dressings had to be changed every day. It was not until 1946 that a skin graft finally freed her from this daily encumbrance.

It was partly because of this that Pearl decided she should go to nearby Elmers Court School, where she boarded, despite being so close to home. Anne's dissatisfaction with the arrangement might explain why her report commented on her "inclination to argue about undisputable facts" – a tendency which (her children tell me) persisted throughout her life!

But there were still the school holidays and, as a teenager, she was taught to type by the family secretary Jane Clowes and to manage a brood of chickens. She meticulously kept a book of accounts – the costs being the day old chicks and the feed, and the income the price which her mother paid for the eggs – 1/6 a dozen. It was a very good business training!

In May 1936, Pearl married Ned Pleydell-Bouverie and Anne found herself with a step-father, soon to be followed a half-brother, Robin.

In April 1938, she went to Florence to stay with an Italian family. This coincided with a state visit by Adolf Hitler. Writing to her mother, Anne excitedly described how she had just seen Hitler getting out of his train, and later how she had pushed through the crowds to get good views Hitler and Mussolini as they toured the city.

In January 1939, Anne went to Paris with her friend Marigold Whitaker, where she spent the next 3 months learning French and visiting the great museums and buildings of the city. She was now approaching her 18th birthday and many of her friends were doing the London season. Ned felt that Anne wasn't well enough, which greatly upset her, but she eventually

persuaded her mother to let her take part, using her grandmother's house in South Street as a base. A newspaper reported: *The ranks of debutantes have an interesting addition in Miss Anne Montagu, who is very fair and has the charm and good looks of her mother; this debutante can pilot a yacht and is a very fine swimmer.*

Unfortunately, it was too late for Anne to be presented at court, but Pearl told her she could do this the following year. Meanwhile, Anne became secretary of the New Forest branch of the British Red Cross Society, of which Pearl was president, so when war broke out she was already in uniform. Plans for completing her 'coming out' had to be abandoned.

She later became an auxiliary nurse at Lymington Hospital and lectured on First Aid and Home Nursing, as well as becoming involved with Red Cross recruitment. In other circumstances, she would have liked to have trained to be a doctor, but the opportunity never arose.

At home, Pearl was very concerned that incendiary bombs might be dropped over Palace House, so she and Anne slept on camp beds in the Upper Drawing Room so they could make regular inspections of the roof in their tin hats.

In 1941, Anne had a recurrence of Osteomyelitis which, combined with heart problems, forced her to stop work. When she recovered, she started a small school in Palace House for local children including her half-brother Robin. In the evenings, there were new social opportunities at RAF Beaulieu Heath where Anne was invited to suppers and dances. She used to take her evening dress in a cardboard box on the back of her bike and then change into it on arrival. She made some close friends amongst the airmen and was unofficially engaged to a Czech pilot but he was sadly killed in action.

By January 1944, her health improved, she took up a new position at the British Red Cross Headquarters in Wilton Crescent. *She is obviously in a bit of a flap but I feel sure she will be good at it*, wrote Pearl. Many of her nights were spent running a First Aid post on the platform of Knightsbridge underground station, after which she had her day job in the office to go to!

One of the friends Anne made during the war was Pam Moore-Gwyn, a talented boat builder who worked on the construction of the mulberry harbours at Buckler's Hard. Pam suggested that Anne should meet her cousin, an officer in the Welsh Guards whose headquarters were next to Red Cross offices in London. Their paths crossed soon enough. Major Howel Moore-Gwyn asked if she would accompany him to a dinner party. Afterwards he walked her home and the next day he telephoned to say he had tickets to a musical – would she like to come? On the third day he took her to dance at a restaurant and on the fourth day he took her to a show at the Albert Hall. Within 3 weeks, he had asked her to marry him.

Anne and Howel were married on 2nd March 1946 at St Peter's Eaton Square by the Archbishop of York, Dr Cyril Garbett, former Bishop of Winchester. Anne was given away by her brother Edward in his Grenadier Guards uniform.

Pearl noted: *Anne looked lovely in a dress of 17 yards of flounce Brussels lace, and a lace veil as a train, worn by 5 generations and lent by Beryl and my Mummy as the lace belonged to Grannie Woodroffe. We expected about 600 guests but we think 550 came as weather was so bad. We had a 3 tiered cake for which I had to collect 2 doz eggs, 5 fat, 8 sugar and 7 fruit coupons!!*

What she didn't mention was that the weight of 550 guests was too much for the floor of the Guards' Club which cracked during the reception!

In April 1947, Anne gave birth to David. Pearl wrote *that the baby had a small nose like Anne, and large mouth and a long back like Howel. His head is a queer shape but soon goes back to normal.* In June, Pearl, Ned, Anne, Howel, Caroline and Mary Clare all attended a Buckingham Palace Garden Party and were presented to the Queen. One does now feel that the girls were presented, noted Pearl.

Not long after, on their delayed honeymoon in Lugarno, Howel fell ill and was subsequently diagnosed with cancer. The Westminster hospital said there was nothing they could do, but Anne, who characteristically wouldn't take no for an answer, wanted him to try a new 'radio-active' treatment in America. She was only 26 at the time and getting flights to New York was extremely difficult, especially with a patient on a stretcher, but she made it happen. Tragically, the treatment proved unsuitable and Howel died in New York, aged 32.

One of the legacies of their short but happy marriage were some songs which Howel composed for which Anne wrote the lyrics. Two of these were played on the organ before the start of this service.

For the next two years, Anne devoted herself to bringing up David, social engagements taking second place. However in the spring of 1950 she was persuaded to attend a dinner hosted by George Meyrick, prior to the New Forest Hunt Ball, and it was there that she met the man who was to become her second husband, Sir John Chichester. Just like the courtship with Howel, things moved fast and they arranged to meet for dinner at the Grand Hotel in Lyndhurst. Anne arrived first and was handed a card on which Johnnie had written "will you marry me?" She wrote on the back: ask me yourself! They were married 'quietly' here at Beaulieu by Tubby Clayton in September 1950. 'Quietly', one supposes, out of consideration for Howel's family, but the church was still packed and, Pearl noted, *the Choir sang very well* assisted by Mary Clare.

Johnnie worked at ICI in Cheshire, and so they made their home at Ollerton Lodge outside Knutsford. Cheshire was a very social county and the Chichesters were at the centre of it. They were accompanied by Betty Smith who had first cooked for Anne when she married Howel and remained with her for the rest of her life. This was a very happy chapter in Anne and Johnnie's life. Jamie was born in 1951, Coral in 1954, Georgina in 1955, and Mary Rose in 1957. With so many sisters, David used to say that every day was like a party. Moreover,

Mary Clare and her children James and Caroline were only an hour away, so the Garnock and Chichester cousins became very much a part of each other's lives.

The routines of their home life are still fondly remembered by the children. They would go and see Johnny and Anne at breakfast in the dining room before leaving for school. Teatime was always in the nursery with nanny or one of the Swiss au pairs, and then Anne would play the piano and read from nursery rhyme books. At the end of the day, she would come to see them in bed and say goodnight with a little song. (Incidentally, she never lost touch with the au pairs she engaged, and boxes of Swiss chocolates winged their way to Battramsley every Christmas.)

The Pony Club played an enormous part in the children's lives and Anne, though not a natural with horses, threw herself into it all with her customary enthusiasm, driving children and ponies to gymkhanas and meets all over Cheshire. It was at this time that their neighbours, the Robinsons, became lifelong friends. But there was more to Anne's life than her duties as a mother. She became an active member of the WI and started a fruit and veg business with their gardener Tom. School runs were combined with deliveries of fruit and veg boxes and by 1958, she had amassed 90 customers!

Not long after, Johnnie retired early due to ill health. Anne longed to return to the New Forest, and so in September 1962 they bought Battramsley. *A lovely house*, Pearl noted, *and Anne is proposing to do big structural alterations. Johnnie groaning!* So extensive were the alterations that they lived at Rachel Forster's cottage at Milford-on-Sea for several months. For the children who had been very happy at Ollerton, the relocation wasn't especially welcomed, but the full life which Anne had organized for them in Cheshire continued just the same at Battramsley. And so we enter the phase of Anne's life which most of us here were a part of.

A year after their move south, Julian was born, completing Anne's offspring of 3 girls and 3 boys. Each child was encouraged to play an instrument, with Anne maintaining the discipline of regular practice sessions! Then there were the outdoor activities which enabled each of her family to flourish in their own way, whether it was tennis, riding, skating, or sailing – she particularly loved the Beaulieu River Sailing Club, of which she was a founder member, and always wanted to be there for the regattas and prize givings.

Anne really was an exceptional mother for whom nothing was too much trouble. If she wasn't taking her children to parties, she was organising them; teenage gatherings at Battramsley, tennis parties at the Lodge, picnics at the shore. And to get them about, a blue Morris minibus was acquired for family transport – an ordinary car not being big enough! Of course it was the social dimension to all these activities which drew so many people into lives of the Chichesters, and Anne and Johnnie gave everyone a warm welcome at Battramsley. Friends whose own parents were not always so pro-active have said she made a huge difference to their teenage years. If it hadn't been for Anne inviting them to lunches, BBQs, supper parties and hunt balls, life would have been quite dull!

So much good had happened to Anne since the tragic loss of Howel in 1947, but then in 1968 she received the news that David had been in a serious car accident – just a week before his 21st birthday. He was in intensive care for a fortnight, but she always believed that the prayers of his remarkable tutor, Harry Williams, saved him. He then underwent three months of treatment at Addenbrokes hospital before he was well enough to be discharged. This was a period of great worry to Anne, but the greatest tragedy for the whole family came in January 1980 when Mary Rose was thrown off her horse and suffered head injuries. She had not even been married to Greville for two years. After 7 days of heartache for the whole family, in which we all hoped against hope that she might regain consciousness, she died. Losing a child is the hardest thing for any parent to face, but whilst everyone was grieving, I think Anne considered it her duty to remain strong and carry on. This included her work as a magistrate and fundraising for the British Heart Foundation.

Outside the family, Anne gave the Heart Foundation more of her time and energy than anything else. She founded the New Forest branch with Prue Mills in 1968 and worked tirelessly on fund raising initiatives such as the annual boat trip to the Cowes, Christmas card sales and collecting in Lymington high street. Her highly proactive approach broke all the rules for tin rattling but she collected more than anyone else! Over the 47 years in which she served as chairman and later president, she raised an incredible £600,000. Her achievements were recognised when she was invited to attend the Woman of Year lunch.

So far as I'm aware, Anne never had a paid job, but she was more than capable of generating additional income when the need arose. In the late 1970s, the playroom at Battramsley was converted for a new business, Rachel Scott designs. She produced an array of sewn products which she sold at charity and Christmas Fairs, and she employed Rouha, an haute couture dressmaker. Johnny was very much a part of this venture, driving her all over the country in a large hired van; he was also her accountant, sales assistant and box carrier. Needless to say, the latter was always accompanied with a lot of huffing and puffing as the merchandise was carried up and down long flights of stairs. And Anne's knowledge of her extended family meant that they were never too far from a cousin who would provide a bed for the night.

As the years passed, Rachel Scott gradually wound down as Anne devoted more time to helping her mother at The Lodge, and managing the various carers who came to help look after her. And with the experience of doing this for her mother, she then did the same for her half-sister Elizabeth at the Mill Race.

Of course later life brought all the pleasures of being a grandmother. Harry, Alice and George; Charlie and Edward; Rosanna, Alexia and Sabrina; Emma Rose and Ben; Linus, Silvy and Ptolemy. And then there were the great grandchildren; Zac, Benji, Eliza and Joseph.

She was equally interested in her nephews and nieces and their children, and loved going to Texas to see Caroline and her family. Anne took a personal interest in each and every member of her family, whether Montagu, Moore-Gwyn or Chichester, and was devoted to all of them. As we have all got older, we have all come to value the knowledge she had, and her ability to explain the complexities of our family tree.

In 2007, Johnnie died, aged 91. In their later years together, Anne's patience and good humour with Johnnie's hearing difficulties was nothing short of saintly, but this did not detract from their many happy years together. Johnnie's departure left a gap like no other in Anne's life and she never stopped missing him.

In her final years, it was wonderful for Anne that she had such devoted carers – led by Joanne who became such a friend. They made her life as good as it could be. And we must be thankful that she had no final illness and that she could be at home to the end.

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I am speaking to you on the assumption that Anne is with us in spirit, and no doubt very sorry not to be with us in person. Not so many years ago, I was sitting in one of these pews with Johnnie, prior to the start of someone's funeral. Anne must have been ill as he was on his own. I said it was a shame that Anne was confined to bed because (I opined) "she loves a good funeral". I had forgotten the futility of speaking in hushed tones to someone who is very hard of hearing. "What?" I drew closer but also raised my voice. "I said... Anne loves a good..." At which point I realised that I could now be heard by most of the congregation, and my words, taken out of context, might be misunderstood. They were, of course – by Johnnie. "What? Anne likes funerals...?" My intended humour had fallen flat.

So, when David asked me to give this address I pondered that little exchange. Anne was certainly most dutiful in attending funerals, and that revealed one of her great qualities. She was loyal to her friends, even in death. Indeed so much of what she did was motivated by a consideration for others and wanting to support those around her. But she had many other qualities...

Her appearance, was one. She had a film star complexion and there was never a day when she didn't look immaculate; her outfit, her hair and her make up.

Upholding standards was another. The correct form of address, which even Coutts bank had difficulty with, and doing things properly at the table; a spoon for the jam, mats to avoid marking the table, warmed plates, and changing for dinner.

She was a very determined individual, who liked to have her own way, and yet she was the kindest possible person, especially in any emergency. She remembered birthdays, sent cards and presents, and always wrote a good letter.

She was a focal point for all branches the family; quite the matriarch after Pearl died. Every member of each generation interested her, including those who might have been overlooked such as Johnnie's mother in Southampton, Howel's sisters, and Mary Rose's husband Greville.

And yes, she loved social gatherings... something you can be assured of after a good funeral.