

Lord Montagu of Beaulieu

Edward John Barrington Douglas-Scott-Montagu,
3rd Baron Montagu of Beaulieu, 20 October 1926 – 31 August 2015



Edward, 3rd Baron Montagu of Beaulieu, was the devoted custodian of his family's 7,000-acre Beaulieu Estate in Hampshire. He was also a champion of the historic vehicle movement and founder of the National Motor Museum. He played a major role in the preservation of England's historic houses and the development of the UK tourism industry.

Edward Montagu inherited the Beaulieu Estate on the death of his father, John Montagu, a motoring pioneer, when he was just two years old. The family seat, Palace House, was built around the original gatehouse of Beaulieu Abbey, a Cistercian monastery founded on land granted to the Order by King John in 1204. The

Estate was sold to Lord Montagu's ancestor, Thomas Wriothesley, 1st Earl of Southampton, by Henry VIII in 1538.

Montagu's birth in 1926 came as a great relief to his father, who at the age of 61 was desperate for a male heir to his title and the estate. After finally fathering the son he had longed for, it was a sad irony that John Montagu died in 1929 leaving Beaulieu to be managed by his widow and trustees until Edward reached the age of 25.

By the age of two, Edward Montagu was thus already a peer of the realm, and gradually came to realise he was also heir to an estate. In 1937, at the age of ten, he attended the coronation of King George VI. The youngest

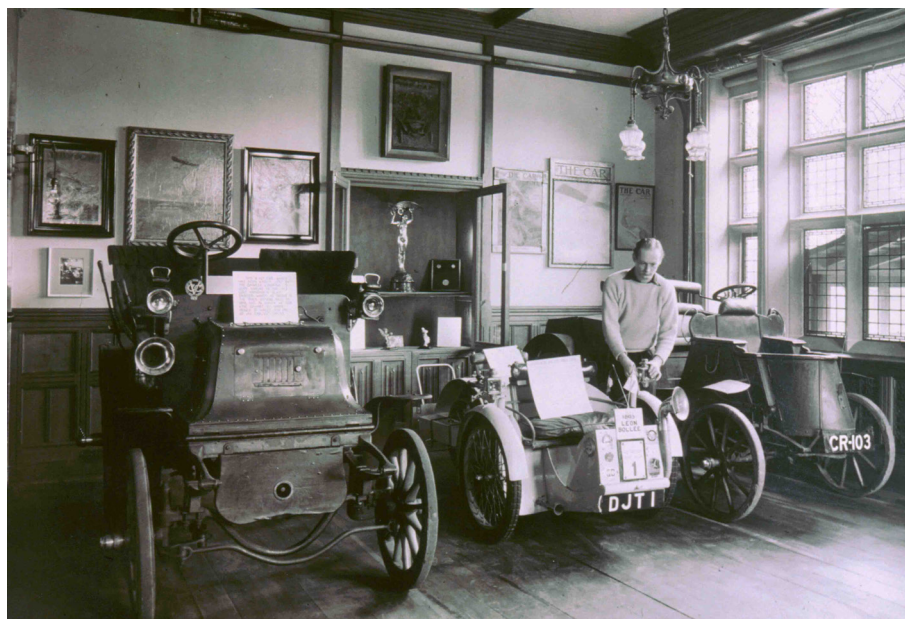
James Bishop writes: In 1974 Lord Montagu entered his National Motor Museum for the Museum of the Year Awards. It caused some debate among the judges: one, a retired director of a London art museum, was concerned that motor cars were not an appropriate subject for a museum. Reluctantly, he was persuaded to visit Beaulieu and was greatly excited by what he saw. The museum won the award, sponsored at that time by National Heritage and *The Illustrated London News*, and Montagu became an avid supporter of the charity.

This article first appeared in The Times 10 September 2015.

Continued on page 2

peer in attendance, he wore a special costume for minor peers and carried a black velvet bag containing sandwiches to sustain him through the day.

In 1936 he went to boarding school, attending St Peter's Court, Broadstairs, a feeder school for Eton College where his name was already down. However, just as he was about to go to Eton, war intervened and he and two of his sisters were evacuated to Canada,



where they would spend the next two and a half years. He returned to England when he was nearly sixteen and belatedly took up his place at Eton.

In 1945, having completed his schooling, he joined the Grenadier Guards and was posted to Palestine as part of a peacekeeping force. When he left the army at the age of 21, he went to New College Oxford where he read modern history. During this time, he also took his seat in the House of Lords, where his maiden speech was about his experience in Palestine.

A keen party-goer, Montagu enjoyed mixing with the artistic and bohemian set as well as being part of conventional society. "I suppose I should have realised that sooner or later... I would end up

in trouble" he would later write. In his second year at university an altercation between the Bullingdon Club and the Oxford University Dramatic Society led to his room being wrecked, and he felt obliged to leave.

Edward Montagu was now determined to carve out a career for himself. "Some eldest sons were sufficiently affluent to retreat to the family estates and lead

a life entirely devoted to their management and enjoyment", he said. "This was not an option for me, nor did I want it."

Instead, he secured a position with the advertising and public relations agency Voice and Vision, where his first job was to launch the now classic comic *Eagle*. He publicised the first issue by hiring a fleet of Daimlers mounted with huge model eagles to tour the country distributing vouchers for the first issue. Over a million were printed and all were sold.

When Edward Montagu took over the running of the Beaulieu Estate on his 25th birthday in 1951, he found that he could expect only £1,500 a year from his inheritance, a figure that would barely cover running costs. "In 1951, to any sensible, rational

being, the house was a white elephant", he would later say. "The wise solution was to get rid of it. For me, however – neither entirely sensible nor rational – that was unthinkable."

Various solutions were considered, but eventually he decided to open the house to the paying public (the abbey ruins and grounds had already been open for many years). In his own words, Edward Montagu's early attempts to attract visitors to the house were "charmingly amateurish".

Palace House was not as grand as other stately homes, such as Longleat, which had opened its doors a couple of years earlier. What was needed, therefore, was an extra ingredient. Montagu later recounted: "What catapulted me permanently into the major league for the future was the idea of commemorating my father's life... by exhibiting veteran cars. Without it, my life would have been very different and I doubt whether I would have been able to remain as owner and occupier of my ancestral home."

The idea would prove to be a winner. In 1952, there were no other motor museums in the country and it also gave Montagu the opportunity to pay tribute to the father he had never known, who as an MP had been an eager campaigner for the needs of early motorists, and publisher of the first motoring journal *Car Illustrated*. The only drawback to this plan was that, at the time, he only had one veteran car, a 1903 6hp De Dion Bouton which had previously been used by the estate electrician. A call-out to the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders produced the additional exhibits he needed to start a small motor museum in the front hall of Palace House.

On opening day, Edward

Montagu told his private house guests that if they received more than a hundred visitors by 6pm they would have champagne with dinner. The doors opened at 11am and by 12.30pm the hundredth visitor passed through: they had champagne with lunch.

Soon after the opening of the house, Edward Montagu embarked on a lecture tour of America to publicise both his stately home and Britain's other historic houses. It proved a great success. However, on his return he would face a difficult time.

The infamous Montagu trials of 1953 and 1954 resulted in the peer being charged with homosexual acts, which were then illegal. He pleaded not guilty but was convicted and given a twelve-month sentence. On his release, he immediately went about



rebuilding his life and developing the estate. While not wanting to hide his bisexuality, he was also determined to keep his private life private and refused to comment on the events of the trial, a silence broken only in 2002 with the publication of his autobiography *Wheels within Wheels*.

The backlash against the heavy-handed prosecution of Edward Montagu and his fellow defendants contributed to the establishment of the Wolfenden Committee, which

in 1957 recommended the decriminalisation of homosexual acts between consenting adults in private. A decade later, this recommendation was implemented. Speaking on the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of the Wolfenden Report, Edward Montagu said, "I am proud ... that the so-called Montagu Case had more effect on changing the laws than any other factor... I think because of the way we behaved and conducted our lives afterwards, because we didn't sell our stories, just returned quietly to our lives ... that had a big effect on public opinion."

By 1956 the vehicle collection, which now included several motorcycles, had outgrown the house and Montagu established a separate home for them in some large sheds in the grounds. The Montagu Motor Museum was born. In the same year, he also launched *Veteran and Vintage* magazine, which he published until its sale to IPC in 1979 (it later became *Collectors' Cars* and eventually *Classic Cars*). Over the years he also became a successful author, *The Gilt and the Gingerbread*, *The Motoring Montagus* and *Jaguar: A Biography* being the best known of the 21 books he wrote on motoring and heritage topics.

By 1959 the vehicle collection had grown even further, and a new building was therefore constructed. It was officially opened by Lord Brabazon of Tara in the presence of many luminaries from the world of motorsport, including Stirling Moss, Tony Brooks and Graham Walker.

Another of Montagu's passions at this time was jazz, and in 1956 he held the first of six Beaulieu Jazz Festivals on the lawns of Palace House. These were



later recognised as pioneering events in the burgeoning music festival movement that followed, and top performers such as John Dankworth, Cleo Laine, Humphrey Lyttleton and George Melly drew large audiences to Beaulieu. However, after what became known as the 'Battle of Beaulieu' at the 1960 festival, involving rival gangs of modern and traditional jazz fans, followed by further trouble in 1961 when 20,000 visitors crowded in for the weekend, Lord Montagu reluctantly called a halt to the events as they were having a detrimental effect on the village and the patience of its residents.

Undaunted, Edward Montagu put his energy into other ventures. Ever the entrepreneur, he noticed that the owners of old cars were having difficulty obtaining authentic tyres, so in 1962 he co-founded Vintage Tyre Supplies which remains the world's largest supplier of original equipment tyres for veteran, vintage and classic cars.

Opposite page: Lord Montagu with the collection in the Palace in the 1950s.

Above left: with his first wife, Belinda, whom he married in 1958. **Above right:** Lord Montagu and his second wife, Fiona, on their wedding day in 1974. All photos by Allan Warren, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edward_Douglas-Scott-Montagu,_3rd_Baron_Montagu_of_Beaulieu



In 1963, Montagu created a Maritime Museum at Buckler's Hard, establishing the village as the second visitor attraction on his estate. Opened by the then Admiral of the Fleet, Earl Mountbatten of Burma, it tells the story of 18th century shipbuilding on the Beaulieu River.

In 1967, the now world-famous Beaulieu Autojumble was held for the first time. The inspiration came from the automobile swap meets Montagu saw in the United States and he was proud that the name he devised, Autojumble, was later given a place in the Oxford English Dictionary.

By the mid-1960s, Beaulieu was attracting over half a million visitors a year. Edward Montagu realised that a long-term plan was needed to fully harness the potential of its leisure and tourism business but in a way that didn't diminish the scenic and conservation value of the estate. He commissioned a leading planner of the day, Elizabeth Chesterton, to draw up a strategy for the redevelopment of the visitor site, a by-pass to

divert traffic away from the village, the construction of a marina at Buckler's Hard and a limited number of residential developments elsewhere on the estate. The overall plan was seen as far-sighted and was the first such large-scale private plan to be accepted as the basis for county planning policy.

The plans for the new Motor Museum and its visitor buildings were then drawn up by the architect Leonard Manasseh. They centred on the design of a new 40,000 square-foot museum with space for at least 200 vehicles. To achieve this, Montagu founded

the Beaulieu Museum Trust. As chairman of the charity, his enthusiasm and drive won the support of the motor industry and other sponsors, and within a couple of years the necessary funds to start construction work had been raised.

This ambitious project, which Montagu's advisors had warned against, came to fruition on 4th July 1972 when The Duke of Kent came to Beaulieu to open what was to become Britain's National Motor Museum. The newly designed visitor complex separated the new motor museum buildings from the historic abbey



ruins and Palace House. It also relocated the car parks, diverting the bulk of visitor traffic away from Beaulieu village. The new buildings, which included a purpose-built admissions centre, cafeteria, motoring research library and offices, won several awards. The most significant of these, the prestigious National Heritage Museum of the Year, was awarded in 1974. In the same year, a monorail was installed, passing through the museum at high level.

It didn't stop there. In 1989, the National Motor Museum Collections Centre opened to provide an administrative centre for the Trust and to house the ever-expanding motoring libraries and archives. The reference library is one of the largest of its kind and together with the photograph and film libraries is used by commercial and private researchers from all over the world.

While he was most closely associated with the motor museum, Edward Montagu's underlying focus remained the management and improvement of the Beaulieu Estate. In 1978 he worked with the Nature Conservancy Council to establish a nature reserve on the southern part of the estate adjoining the Solent foreshore. He also founded a charity called the Countryside Education Trust. This now operates two centres on the estate, including a residential centre on a small farm, and welcomes over 5,000 children and adults each year.

From the time he first opened Beaulieu to the public, Lord Montagu worked to establish an association for the owners of stately homes. Some of the old guard opposed this, especially when a membership fee was suggested, but in 1973 the Historic

Houses Association was finally formed with Lord Montagu as its President. Today, the organisation represents 1,600 houses and has 42,000 friends. He was also closely involved in establishing the Association of Independent Museums, of which he was Patron.

In 1983, in recognition of his innovative approach and commercial success, the government invited him to chair its new Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission, which he soon renamed English Heritage. Those who feared the insensitive commercialisation of ancient sites were proved wrong, although Montagu did make them more visitor-friendly, with improved interpretation and facilities. When the government decided to abolish the GLC, the then Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher was said to have endorsed the transfer of its historic buildings to English Heritage because "Edward Montagu will know what to do with them."

Montagu regularly attended the House of Lords and when the 1999 reforms were implemented he was one of the Conservative hereditary peers elected to remain. Over the course of six decades, he spoke on motoring, tourism, museums, historic buildings, conservation and the New Forest.

Lord Montagu was an active in many clubs, associations and organisations and held the Presidencies of the Tourism Society (1991-2000), the Southern Tourist Board (1977-2004), the Museums Association (1982-1984) and the Institute of Journalists (2000). He was Chancellor of the Wine Guild of the UK from 1983 and President of the UK Vineyards Association from 1996. He was also instrumental in setting up an advisory group that

became the Federation of British Historic Vehicle Clubs, of which he was President. In 2012 Lord Montagu received the accolade of a lifetime achievement award for his dedication to preserving automotive history over many decades.

Lord Montagu played as hard as he worked. He was a keen shot, loved foreign travel, went wind-surfing off his own foreshore and regularly competed in historic motorsport events. He also had a passion for the theatre, opera, gourmet restaurants and parties, for which he never lost enthusiasm despite mobility difficulties in later life.

Edward Montagu was first married in 1959, to Belinda Crossley. They had a son, Ralph, in 1961 and a daughter, Mary, in 1964. The marriage was dissolved in 1974, after which he married Fiona Herbert in 1974 with whom he had a second son, Jonathan, in 1975. His elder son, Ralph, succeeds to the barony.



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Two museums in Denmark



Ray Sutcliffe

Ray Sutcliffe visited the Sea War Museum Jutland and the Moesgaard Museum

Gert Normann, co-owner of the subsea company JD-Contractor felt that the First World War was not only fought in the muddy trenches of Flanders, but also on the stormy North Sea and decided to create the **Sea War Museum Jutland** to tell the dramatic history and fill it with the many artifacts which his team of divers had salvaged over the years.

The museum is situated on the West Coast of Jutland, from where it was possible to follow the Battle of Jutland in 1916. The ships were too far out to be seen, but the roar of the big guns came in from the sea like rolling thunder.

It was the first and only encounter between the German High Seas Fleet and the British Grand Fleet, and the result was devastating. 250 ships and 100,000 men met with the sole purpose of destroying and killing each other, and the amount of firepower was so great that it could have destroyed a big city.

For 24 hours the big guns kept firing gigantic shells that could penetrate even the strongest armour. It was history's greatest naval battle and when it was over, 25 ships lay on the seabed and 9000 young men would never see the light of day again.

Sea War Museum Jutland not



Above: Painting by Johannes E. Møller depicting Four German mine trawlers being fired on and were later sunk by British Naval forces on the west coast of Jutland. Below: the 11-ton conning tower from the British submarine E-50 which is on display with kind permission of the Royal Navy. On 31 January 1916 the E-50 struck a mine, and the whole crew of 30 was lost. In the museum they are remembered with a memorial plaque.

only tells the history about the Battle of Jutland, but also about four years of war, which was fought on, above and below the surface of the sea. It was four brutal years with submarines and zeppelins, with mine war and destroyer war, with trade-war and cruiser war.

Men fought and died in the cold waves of the North Sea and maybe it was here, the war was decided. Whoever controlled the sea-lanes to Britain would win the war, and consequently the North Sea came to play a crucial role.

The museum is housed in historic buildings that formerly belonged to the Danish Coastal Authority. It is funded by the Realdania Foundation, Lemvig Municipality and the subsea company JD-Contractor A/S and is supported by Maritimhistorisk Selskab - Maritime Historical Society.



Sea War Museum Jutland
Kystcentervej 11
7680 Thyborøn
Denmark
www.seawarmuseum.dk

The museum is open every day.
Adults Kr79, Seniors over 65 years, Kr74, children aged 3-12 Kr69 and children aged 0-2 free.



Moesgaard Museum (MOMU) is a regional museum dedicated to archaeology and ethnography.

It is located in Højbjerg, a suburb of Aarhus, Denmark. The museum's striking new exhibition building was designed by Henning Larsen Architects. The sloping grass-covered roof appears to grow up out of the hilly landscape around the old manor buildings. There is a roof patio where you can enjoy the view of the forest and sea. The interior is designed to resemble a terraced landscape - opening up a multi-layered, multi-faceted narrative.

The main part of the museum's archaeological collection is of Danish origin. In addition, the Ethnographical Collections contain almost 50,000 artefacts from all over the world.

The museum's exhibitions presents several unrivalled archaeological findings from Denmark's ancient past, amongst others the Grauballe Man, the world's best preserved bog body and the large ritual weapon caches from Illerup Ådal, testifying the power struggles and warfare of the Iron Age. The collection also contains seven local rune stones. Temporary exhibitions at the museum also display examples of the world's cultural heritage.

Ray saw the Terracotta Warrior exhibition while he was there, but the idea is to have a rolling programme of touring exhibitions.



The First Emperor - China's Terracotta Army. The exhibition closed on 30 September and was seen by more than 340,000 visitors.

Moesgaard Museum
Moesgård Allé 15
8270 Højbjerg
Denmark
<http://www.moesgaardmuseum.dk>
Info@moesgaardmuseum.dk

Open Tues 10-5, Wed 10-9, Thurs-Sun 10-5, closed on Mondays. Adults (18+ years) DKK 110, Seniors over 65 years & students (with current ID card) 90 DKK, children 17 years and under free.



All photos courtesy of the Media Department - MoesgaardMuseum



Robin Wade

11 April 1929 - 11 September 2015

Innovative museum designer who helped modernise institutions from Ironbridge to the British Museum

Neil Cossons

From the late 1960s, museums moved from the twilight to the spotlight of public esteem, through a fusion of sound curatorship and innovative exhibition design. Robin Wade, who has died aged 86, was one of the key figures in effecting this transformation. By the mid-60s most museums had discovered the benefits of professional presentation and the larger ones set up big in-house design studios. These have now largely disappeared, not only as victims of high fixed costs and intermittent workload but because a new, more flexible and creative option was on offer.

It came from independent designers in small practices. They developed specialist museum display skills and were adaptable,

responsive, affordable and good. The best are now world leaders in museum design. Robin was one of these. By the time he retired, he had completed several hundred projects, from entire museum design schemes to smaller assignments for the burgeoning new breed of independent museums. His work ranged from major galleries at the British Museum to display of the national collection of telephone boxes at Avoncroft Museum of Historic Buildings in Worcestershire.

Son of Nancye (nee Fethers) and Evan Wade, Robin was born in Melbourne, Australia; his mother died of tuberculosis the year after his birth. A haphazard boyhood – seven homes and six schools – left him, as he put it, timid, with big glasses, a bad stammer, second

from the bottom in class but “good with his hands”. After five years as an apprentice cabinetmaker, he escaped to better things.

This came through a passage to Britain. He arrived in 1950 with no contacts and nowhere to go. His wood-carving skills took him to the bombed Houses of Parliament, where he “carved endless Pugin mouldings in very hard English oak”. He was spellbound by the Festival of Britain and feasted on museums, galleries and concerts. He joined a judo club but this put him into St George’s hospital, then situated at Hyde Park Corner. There he became captivated by his nurse, Penny Ladds, and she him; they married in 1953 and had three children. She later became a founder of the National Childbirth Trust.

Encouraged by a friend to study at the Royal College of Art, he turned up there with no qualifications other than his practical experience with wood, gained an interview with the furniture designers RD “Dick” Russell and David Pye in the school of wood, metals and plastics, and won a place as a student. Under its new rector, Robin Darwin, the RCA was in the ascendant – self-confident, anarchic and bursting with talent. Russell saw talent in Robin, helped him win a scholarship and, after his graduation with distinction, encouraged him to visit Finland and Denmark. In Copenhagen he met Børge Mogensen, the leading Scandinavian furniture designer, and worked for a year in his studio. On his return, in 1956, Russell took Robin into his own practice, working mainly on furniture design.

Robin’s first professional encounter with museum design was working with Russell, RY



Godden and another RCA graduate, Alan Tilbury, who were engaged to redesign the Greek and Roman galleries in the British Museum. Here Robin worked with



Denys Haynes, keeper of Greek and Roman antiquities, who was to become one of his heroes.

Sir John Pope-Hennessy, later director of the British Museum, wrote: "When these rooms opened in 1969 they were the best-designed galleries of their day in any London museum and the best-designed galleries of classical sculpture in the world. They set a

standard so high as to underline the deficiencies of the rest of the museum."

By then Robin was working independently and building the team that was to become Robin Wade Design Associates. An early commission, in 1972, came from the Ironbridge Gorge Museum where, as director, I had already admired his work and approach. Over some 10 years he designed a sequence of new museums, all in adapted historic buildings. His work led to Ironbridge winning the Museum of the Year award in 1977 and the first European Museum of the Year award in 1978.

Later, at the Science Museum, I turned to him again for a refresh of the flight gallery, where he used a novel warehouse stacking system

to display the aircraft engines collection. It has stood the test of time well. We collaborated again on major projects at the National Railway Museum in York, including the Great Railway Show (1990), in the goods shed across the road from the main building. This enabled much of the national collection to stay on display while the museum's roof was being replaced. It won the Museum of the Year award in 1991.

Robin's output was prolific. Exhibitions included the Chinese Exhibition (1973) at the Royal Academy, Destruction of the Country House (1974) at the V&A, Vikings (1980) at the British Museum, and Magna Carta (1988) in Brisbane.

His spectacular Egyptian sculpture galleries at the British Museum were controversial, but he wisely stood his ground against pressures to paint the space in Pompeian reds, most notably from the Victorian Society. In 1858, the Victorian sculptor Richard Westmacott had recommended a stone colour, in line with the original intentions of the museum's architect, Robert Smirke. Robin's scheme, with carefully tuned lighting, picked up on this report, and let the exhibits speak with confidence, reinforcing

Opposite page: Robin at Royal College with Percy Hancock, Head of Workshop (left) and Professor Dick Russell (right) Top: 'Destruction of the Country House' exhibition, 1975 – V&A. Centre and bottom right: Great Warehouse, Ironbridge Gorge Museum. All photos except top, courtesy of the Robin Wade Archive.





Right: (from left to right) Harry James, Keeper, Tony Snook, Stone technician, Robin Wade and David McCabe at the BM during Egyptian Gallery project. **Above:** The Egyptian Gallery, British Museum, Both photos courtesy of the Robin Wade Archive.

the nobility of the Greek revival interior.

Dozens of smaller museum exhibitions and design studies were a distinguishing feature of Robin's practice. He wrote strategic plans for new museums or the modernisation of old ones, designed visitor centres, signposting schemes, graphics panels and publications.

Regrettably, his brilliant proposal for the Museum of Australia in Canberra came to nothing, after more than a year's work with a large team of Australian academics and museum professionals. The plan featured a series of galleries surrounding a central rotunda devoted, as Robin put it, to "who we Australians are now and our relationship with this vast island". It was greeted with great enthusiasm, but the government changed, as did the site of the museum and the scheme died.

Robin developed a close relationship with Vince Gleason at the US National Park Service, and its interpretive team at Harpers

Ferry, West Virginia. Gleason, who said he had "come to London to meet the best designer", commissioned Wade to write and design publications and panels for historic iron-working sites, notably Hopewell Furnace in Pennsylvania.

In the quiet and thoughtfully told stories of Canterbury Cathedral, in the crypt (1975), and King's College, Cambridge, in the side chapels (1987), it was hard to see the hand of the designer, such was Robin's acute sense of place.

Key to his success was his focus on the visitor, on simple design and clearly written words, without a compromise of intellectual integrity. He saw himself as an interpreter to the public, disliking prescriptive written briefs, but preferring to sit down with his client and work up ideas from basic principles. Peter Saunders, former director of the Salisbury and South Wiltshire Museum, where Robin worked over several years, summed up his approach as "rapport, patience ... imagination

and brilliant application of lateral thinking to problem solving".

To work with Robin was a spirited adventure. A sensitive and civilised man and an accomplished cellist, he was never pretentious or high-handed, always open-minded and keen to engage his client in vigorous and creative debate.

Penny died in 2008. Robin is survived by their children, Tim, Jennie and Emma.

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First NH Volunteer Management Training Workshop

Liz Moore

It was a truly interesting and informative day on 17 September when heritage organisations from all over the country met at NADFAS House for National Heritage's first Volunteer Management Training Workshop.

Florien Schweizer, Chloe Bevan and their teams looked after us all very well indeed, and Florian welcomed everyone warmly. Full notes of the day can be found on <http://nationalheritage.org.uk/volunteer-management-training-workshops/> but the talks included Kristen Stephenson on **Current legislation and best practice in managing volunteering**, and she gave some excellent notes on DBS, and a paper on Barriers to Volunteering. Amanda Le Poer Trench followed Kristen on **Assising the Value of Volunteers - the VIVA**. After lunch, Rachel

Clark from the National Trust spoke on **Volunteer recruitment and retention and the role Volunteer Managers play in the National Trust**. After which Case Studies were presented, first by Chloe Bevan Chloe outlined the role NADFAS plays and illustrated the Southside Textile project. Finally Gail Bromley presented a case study by Emma Harrison of Historic Houses Association on how best to recruit volunteers and her own on how to deal with difficult volunteers.

The feedback Gail has received has been very positive indeed and during the day loads of aspects were raised and Gail noted them for future coverage. **Meanwhile if anyone has any interesting or urgent topics to explore**, please contact liz@lizm.eclipse.co.uk



Luggage van which carried Unknown Warrior to London

Liz Moore

The Cavell Van No. 132, which is on display at Bodiam Station, East Sussex was a prototype parcels van, built by the South Eastern and Chatham Railway in 1919.

It was in this van that the bodies of three First World War heroes were conveyed back to Britain - in May 1919 the body of the Nurse Edith Cavell, in July of the same year that of Captain Charles Fryatt, who had been executed for ramming a German U-boat, and the Unknown Warrior on 10th November 1920 ahead of the unveiling of the Cenotaph memorial and the funeral at Westminster Abbey on Armistice Day.

Nearly a million British personnel had been killed during World War I and the government had decided quite early in the war that the bodies of servicemen killed overseas would not be returned home. There were also a huge number of casualties with no known grave or who were unidentified.

As early as 1916 the Army Chaplain, Reverend David Railton, had wondered whether the body of one of the many unidentified dead could be returned for burial as a representative of all those who had been killed, in an effort to ease the pain of the bereaved back home. In 1920, he wrote to General Sir Douglas Haig with the notion, but got no reply. Undeterred, wrote to the Dean of Westminster Abbey, Herbert Ryle



who was taken with the idea and took up the campaign. Reverend Ryle sought approval from King George V and David Lloyd George, the Prime Minister. It was Lloyd George who persuaded the King and all haste was made for the necessary preparations in time for Armistice Day.

Elaborate precautions were taken to ensure that no one knew the origin of the chosen body, so the remains of four unidentified



Top: Interior of the Cavell van at Bodiam Station, East Sussex by Liz Moore. Above: Exterior of the van at Bodiam Station, courtesy of Michael Roots https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Cavell_van_restored.JPG,

British soldiers were recovered from the battlefields and one was selected by Brigadier General Wyatt, before it was transported to Dover and onward to London by rail.

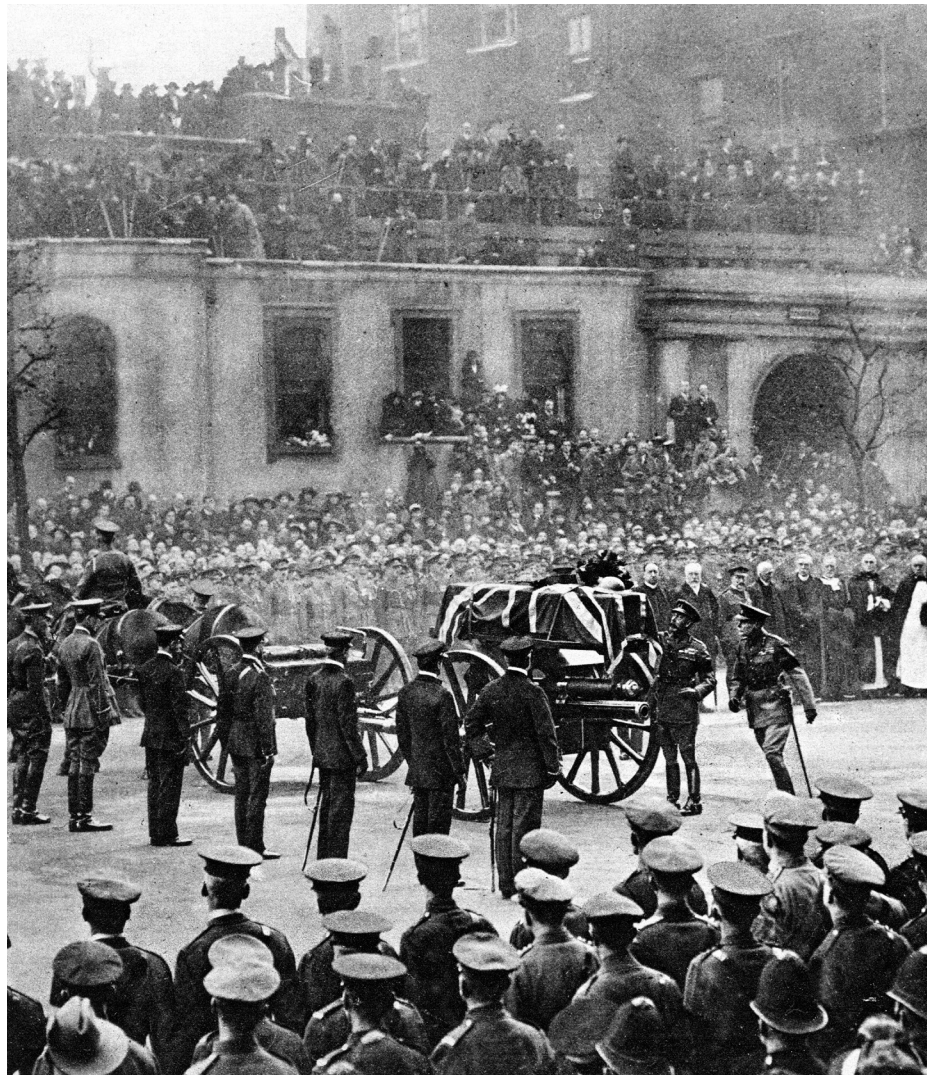
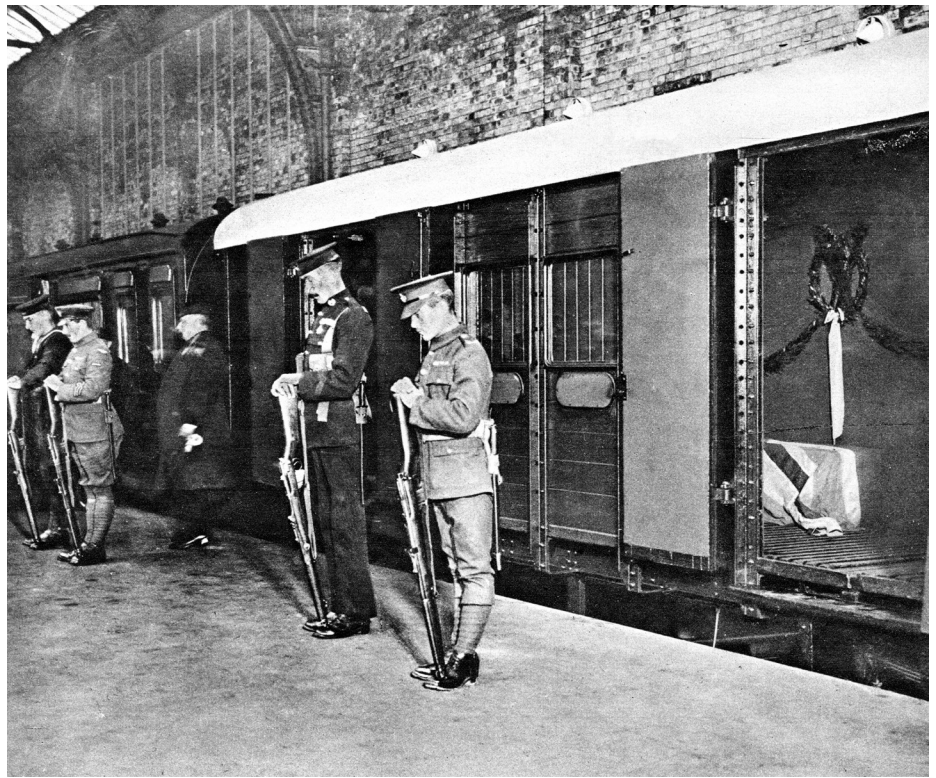
The train consisted of the engine, the Cavell Van (as it was now popularly known) and a saloon carriage for the escort. John Preston wrote in his article *The Unknown Warrior: A hero's return*, "As the train made its way to London, every station it passed through was filled to overflowing. People stood in silence with heads bowed. When it arrived at Victoria Station, thousands of people tried to push aside temporary barriers and extra police had to be drafted in to deal with the crowds. That night, the luggage van stood in darkness on one of the platforms, with four guards standing watch."

"Shortly after nine o'clock the next morning, 11 November, a bearer party of eight guardsmen entered the luggage van. The coffin was placed on a gun carriage. Behind it, already assembled in line, were the heads of the Armed Forces and 400 former servicemen, standing four abreast."

"At 9.40, in pale winter sunlight, the parade moved off. An enormous crowd – the largest seen in the capital – watched as the coffin was borne through the streets. There was no sound except for people sobbing and the clop of horses' hooves.

As an outpouring of public grief, only the funeral of Diana, Princess of Wales nearly 80 years later has ever matched it."

This article is published with grateful thanks to Rother Valley Railway, Brian Janes author of *The Unknown Warrior and the Cavell Van*, from which this article is largely drawn together with that of John Preston's article, *The Unknown Warrior: A hero's return* Daily Telegraph 9 Nov 2008. www.telegraph.co.uk



Top: Cavell Van at Dover Station where it stood for an hour guarded by four men representing the Navy, Air Force, Royal Marines and the Army, 10 November 1920. Above: King George V places his wreath of bay leaves and red roses on the coffin of the Unknown Warrior at the Cenotaph 11 November 1920 - both photos courtesy of Topfoto.