

WARDOUR and the ARUNDELLS Not So Long Ago

Introduction

Wardour means many different things. It means the old Castle and the story of Sir Thomas Arundell who captured the Turkish standard at the battle of Gran in 1595. It means the story of Blanche, wife of the 2nd Lord Arundell who defended the Castle for nine days in 1643 against the Parliamentarians and was then taken prisoner; and the magnificent new Castle built for the 8th Lord Arundell in the 1770's and the staircase at the centre of it, "the heart of gold enshrined by the decorously restrained exterior". It means the story of a family and a community whose loyalty to the Catholic faith never wavered despite the penalties and hardships involved, to the extent that by 1839 80% of all Catholics in Wiltshire lived on the Wardour Estate. Lastly, it is the 1939-45 War Memorial in Tisbury Square with this simple inscription among the many others:

John Francis Lord Arundell

However, this booklet is not a history of Wardour and the Arundells. Such a work would involve a great deal of research and scholarship. It sets out simply to record something of Wardour during the last hundred years, mainly through the words of people who were eyewitnesses of the estate and the life that was lived there. The last hundred years have seen many profound changes and in Wardour, these changes have been greater than in most places. The last Lord Arundell died in 1944, the old Castle is now under the guardianship of the Department of the Environment and the new Castle is a school. The aim of this booklet is to record something of the old Wardour "before memory fades".

Many people have helped with the production of this booklet and my thanks to them all; especially to the Hon. Mrs Isabel Fagan, Mrs. Hoskins, Mrs. Morgan, Mrs. E. Williamson, Mr. R.J.R. Arundell, Sir Martin Gilliat, Jack Mullins and Les Owen.

B.D.W.
June 1982



Family group at the door to the East Wing, taken about 1928.
The 15th Lord & Lady Arundell with the Hon. John and the Hon. Isabel Arundell

Wardour in 1871

A census has been taken every ten years since 1801 (except 1941). The Enumerators books are available for inspection after 100 years. They give information about the age, occupation and place of birth of all inhabitants and thus enable some insight to be gained into a community as it was 'frozen' for one day in the past (in this case April 13). In 1871, Wardour was counted as a separate parish and this continued until 1921 after which it was dissolved and became part of Tisbury.

The area which comprised Wardour was very large, presumably covered the central part of the estate. It stretched from Course Street in Tisbury to Withyslade Farm and Tisbury Row (where there were 19 houses and 90 inhabitants); then to Squalls Farm, old Wardour, the new Castle, the Mill, Bridzor, Hazelton and back to Tisbury to include Church Street, Pool Lane, New Road and High Street. The total population was 679. It had been 706 in 1801 and remained at around this figure until the last census in 1921.

There were 148 households in Wardour. Surprisingly, the three largest had only 10 members in each of them - Frederick Scott's in Tisbury Row, Abdiel Combes' at Wallmead Farm and George Ford's at Bridzor. Nevertheless, the average size was 4.5 persons in a household compared with the average in Britain in of 2.1 in 1871.

Only 8 people lived alone and they were all widows or widowers except Miss Eliza Hannan, the Irish-born schoolmistress who lived in Bridzor. A remarkable fact about the community in Wardour at this time was the large number of young people. There were 334, nearly 50% were below 21 years of age. Of these, 183 were listed as scholars and presumably attended schools in Wardour and Tisbury.

Only 57 people were age 60 or over; there were very few over 70. The oldest were Martha Street, a widow age 85 living in Tisbury Row and John Calver 83, a stonemason living with his son in New Road Tisbury.

The occupations of the heads of households tell us something about the community. There were 33 farm labourers, 16 stonemasons, 7 railway labourers, 7 carpenters but only 1 blacksmith - Samuel Kerslake in Tisbury. There were 6 gardeners, all living near Wardour Castle (presumably employed there), 5 shoemakers and a shepherd - George Whatley in Course Street.

There were 2 school masters and 2 school mistresses; the Rev. Edward Hood from Shoreham was the Catholic priest. Arthur Holloway was listed as Professor of Music - perhaps he played in the chapel. There was a watchmaker in Tisbury (George Osmond), a horse clipper and barber (Henry Fray), a thatcher (John Foyle) as well as 3 grocers and bakers, a butcher, a tailor and a nurse (Jane Gane, a 43 year old widow). Many women worked as laundresses, needlewomen and milliners. 27 children under 16 were working, mostly as farm labourers, but they included an errand boy (George Thompson in Squalls Lane) and a coal hauler (Henry Fray).

Servants were commonplace in Victorian households; it is therefore not surprising that 15 households in Wardour employed a general servant - three households had 2. The greatest number of servants were employed at Wardour Castle - 10 on census day 1871, probably less than normal because Lord and Lady Arundell were away and would have taken some maids, valets and coachmen with them.

The 10 servants remaining at the Castle consisted of a butler (George Goodison), a cook (Eliza Carter born in Ireland), a footman (Samuel Gurd), two housemaids, a kitchen maid, scullery, laundry and lady's maid and a groom. It is interesting that the lady's maid and laundry maid were both from Durham. Presumably Lady Arundell had brought them with her when she married in 1862.

Other estate staff lived near the Castle, mostly in Nightingale Lane. There was Samuel Harrison (groom and gardener), William Mullins (gardener), Charles Foyle (estate carpenter), William Fisher (coachman) and Sam Adams (gamekeeper at Grove Lodge).

Lastly, the place of birth of the people living at Wardour reflects the stability of those days. 458 were born in Wardour or Tisbury, another 127 in nearby villages (mainly Donhead, Ansty, Swallowcliffe and Fonthill) and only 94 had moved to Wardour from other parts of the country. This last figure of 13% of the total population is larger than for most rural areas at this time and perhaps reflects the growth of Tisbury, stimulated by the coming of the railway.

Family History

One hundred years ago, the 12th Lord Arundell and his wife Anne Lucy were well established at Wardour. They had married on October 13th 1862 and he had succeeded to the title only six days later.

Wardour estate consisted of 6,037 acres. According to a survey in 1873, the estate produced an income of £9,054 a year but this was small compared with the colossal income from land of a man like the Duke of Devonshire who enjoyed £156,990 a year, nevertheless, it put Lord Arundell among the 15 wealthiest land owners in Wiltshire.

The 12th Lord was unusual in that he combined scholarship with the typical country pursuits of a landowner. He loved history and was enough of a classicist to publish several books including "The Secret of Planto's Atlantis". He wrote a history of the Arundells and one of his contemporaries commented, with perhaps some exaggeration, that if he had devoted his time to writing history, his work would have been second only to such a man as Lord Acton.

On a personal level, the couple had great cause for sadness. No children had been born to the 12th Lord Arundell and Anne Lucy. Many were not surprised. In October 1862 when the hatchments were erected at the Castle on the death of the 11th Lord, one of them fell. An old superstition said that because of this, no heir would be born. Nevertheless, in 1881 there were plenty of male members of the family who could carry on the title. In addition to Lord Arundell's two brothers, there were 3 cousins (of the Ashcombe branch) Raymond, Edgar and Gerald, all in their twenties and unmarried.

By 1905 the future was not so assured. The 12th Lord's brother Everard was a priest and his half brother Edward had died unmarried in India. Of the 3 cousins, Raymond had died unmarried, Edgar had married a widow and had no children and Gerald was still unmarried. Therefore the 12th Lord Arundell made a complicated will settlement. He left the estates away from the title to his wife Ann Lucy for life. Then they were to go to his cousin Gerald and then to his (Gerald's) first and every other son in tail male. Failing that line, the estates were to go to Edgar (unlikely since he was older than Gerald) and then to Reginald Talbot, the husband of his Goddaughter. The conditions were that anyone who inherited the estates should bear the name and arms of Arundell, ensure the upkeep of the Chapel and refrain from cutting down any trees on the estate over ten feet in girth.

The 12th Lord died 11 months after making his will. One of the obituaries said "He would always listen with the keenest interest to the conversation of others, no matter what their station in life" and described how every day at Wardour he would spend an hour in the afternoon sitting on a seat outside the north front of the Castle so that any tenant or employee could talk to him on any subject.

Then began what the last Lord Arundell called "the saddest period in the family history". No one could have foreseen that Ann Lucy would live for another 28 years after the death of her husband. She became increasingly eccentric. Gerald Arundell had married in 1906 and came to live at the Castle in the East Wing and it was there that his 3 children grew up. It does not need much imagination to understand the strain and tension of those years. Gerald and his family had to watch the Dowager Ann Lucy make erratic decisions about the estate.

Meanwhile, the titled passed from the 12th Lord's brother to his cousin Edgar. The 14th Lord hardly ever stayed at Wardour; he was in the Merchant Navy and saw service in South Africa with Baker's Horse. He died in 1921 and Gerald inherited the title. But there were 13 more years before he inherited the estate on the death of the Dowager Ann Lucy in 1934.

Gerald and his family immediately began the task of restoring the estate and the Castle. Plans were made to plant new woodland, to repair the dome and saloon in the Castle, to catalogue the medieval documents and to preserve the old Castle. There was much to be done and Gerald's son John was ideally fitted for the task. It was a cruel blow that war broke out only months after John himself succeeded to the title in 1939. Thereafter, he spent only a few more weeks at Wardour. This part of the story is perhaps best told in the words of Cecil Turner - further on in this booklet.

The Old Days

Mrs Morgan

Mrs. Morgan belongs to the Foyle family who came from Cornwall with the Arundells. She has lived most of her life in Wardour.

"My father was a carpenter and maintenance man on the estate. We were expecting our first child and living in lodgings. My father asked the old Dowager Lady Arundell if we could have St. Mary's Cottage and she said 'Bernard, it's only to one of your family I'd let it'. We were very grateful to her.

We did most of our shopping in Tisbury. We had a pony and trap - you'd drive up to the shop and someone would come running out and take your order. There was just one small grocer's shop - Harry Gurd's - and it was very handy. Tradesmen called daily with bread and milk, the butcher twice a week and the fishmonger every Friday. There wasn't a blacksmith in Wardour; we went to Dewey's in Donhead. There used to be an old mill just past the shop in Wardour where my father lived but it was burnt down when he was living there.

The community at Wardour was, until the end of World War 11, a totally Catholic one composed of estate workers, tenant farmers and cottagers. It was a very close community, allowed to wander at will through unfenced fields and woods on the understanding that no damage was done. People lived a happy peaceful friendly existence. Transport was on foot, bicycle or pony and trap until an enterprising Mr. Lewis ran a chocolate coloured bus twice a week from Donhead to Tisbury; fares were a few of the old pence.

Pleasures were simple and many events took place at the Guildhall. This was a building opened on November 18 1885. It was erected at the sole expense of the old Lady Arundell for the benefit of members of the Guild of St. Ignatius and the Guild of the Children of Mary. Here meetings were held and dances, plays and whist drives, bazaars and other social events. There was a fine stage for dramatic performances; some of the scenery was specially painted by an artist from Paris.

Education was taken care of too. In the early nineteenth century, infants were taught in one house, girls in another and boys in a third. Later in the century, a permanent school was built. Each child paid a few pence a week. Catholic children came from Wardour and the surrounding villages, Tisbury, Hatch, Ansty and Donhead, all walking unless lucky enough to be given a lift in a passing milk cart.

The 12th Lord Arundell, whose sister became a nun of the order of Sisters of Charity, invited the members to come and teach in the school and provided a convent for them. The nuns remained at Wardour for 70 years. They took a great interest in the families of their pupils and prepared children for their first communion and the Corpus Christi procession. On the Communion Day, Lady Arundell invited the children to the Castle for some breakfast and gave them each a prayer book or some small gift.

A big event of the year was the fete in the grounds of the old Castle on Whit Monday. There would be boat swings, coconut shies, hoopla and stalls selling sweetmeats etc. We didn't have much pocket money but it went far in those days. The grown-ups delighted in watching the children perform the Maypole dance and folk dances, so loved by Cecil Sharp, accompanied by the Ansty Silver Band. Wardour school children were taught dancing by the nuns who demanded perfection; they were in great demand at other fetes. Some of these dancers are still alive today - but not dancing!

The young men had very good cricket and football teams and competed with other villages. The womenfolk always provided free teas. In my mother's day, they had a tenants' ball once a year at the Castle, but not in my time. They had a dinner once a year for the Catholic Benefit Society at the old Castle and Lord Arundell would be there with Mr. Morrison and Dr. Knight.

I remember John Arundell very well. He loved Wardour and its people. Before going to war in 1939, he visited every person on the estate to say goodbye. I was cleaning shoes when he came into this room. He was a good and brave man but sadly he died unmarried and that meant great changes on the estate.

The Jesuits bought the Castle and some of the farms and cottages. Then the Castle was used by Group Captain Leonard Cheshire VC as one of his Homes, but it wasn't suitable and it soon closed down. Eventually the Castle became Cranborne Chase School. Many of the old inhabitants of Wardour have gone; in the old days everyone was connected with the estate. There've been so many changes but it's still a peaceful and beautiful part of Wiltshire and a lovely place to live".

Jack Mullins

Jack's family have been connected with Wardour for at least 200 years; he worked as a gardener and then a forester.

"My father was a coachman to the Dowager Lady Arundell. He used to drive the carriages and take the post out to the A30 twice a day. They had three types of carriages - the broughams, the wagonettes and the high coaches. They used the brougham for local drives, with my father sitting in the front. When my father died, my younger brother took over as coachman, but it didn't last much longer.

I suppose about a hundred people worked on the estate in the old days - they had their own workshops for everything and sawmills. They had their own gravel pits to keep the roads in good repair. Nightingale Lane was an estate road, just a rough road surface, and when it got deep ruts, they put gravel on top. The workshop for the estate was at the back beside the Dairy House. The men were kept busy with all the repairs to farms and cottages. One character I remember was Silas Asprey. He'd lost an arm in the saw mill but he managed very well with just a hook.

I remember the old Dowager well. She was very stern. She liked to rule everyone. She used to see the farm manager and estate managers every week in the Castle and give them orders.

One of the big events in Wardour was on Whit Monday when we had the dinner for the Benefit Club. You paid so much a week into the Club and if you were sick you'd get something every week. We'd have a church service on Whit Monday and march down to the old Castle with the band playing. We had the meal in the Banqueting Hall. There used to be parties for children in the Castle given by Lord Gerald and Lady Ivy. They were very kind. The server boys had a party at Epiphany and a special cake was made for them, but I never had any because I was in the choir.

I used to play in the Ansty Silver Band - there were about 30 of us in it at one time, but it gradually dwindled. We used to practice in the old Army hut at Ansty and then, when that was sold, we went to the old stables in the Arundell Arms there.

We played at church services, for the Corpus Christi procession round the grounds (if it was a big event) and for the fetes and dances round the maypole. The instruments were all sold about five years ago. There was no-one to carry on - there were only about seven of us left. I played the cornet to start with, then the baritone.

I knew John Arundell very well. He was a stern man, but very good. He was very regimental, a proper soldier. He was called up to war at the same time as me. He was very fond of Wardour. These were good days”.



Meeting of the Wardour Benefit Society at the old Castle, about 1900.
The group is standing in front of the main doorway of the Castle.
The 12th Lord Arundell is seated third from the right on the front row.
Members of the Ansty Silver Band are sitting at the front.

Martina Hoskins

Mrs. Hoskins was born in Wardour and went to work in Wardour Castle when she was 14.

“I went as parlour maid and stayed till I was called up into the ATS in 1939. My family always lived in Wardour - my father worked on the estate as did my uncle and a cousin worked in the gardens. There was a big kitchen garden opposite the Castle with a great wall round it - vegetables, fruit and flowers grew there.

The family then was Lord and Lady Arundell and their three children. They lived in the East Wing of the Castle and moved into the main part when the old Lady Arundell died in 1934. The old Dowager was Miss, Mrs and Lady all in one week back in 1862. We used to see her quite a lot; she sat up in the tribunes in the chapel. She wore a long black dress and bonnet, a real Victorian lady. My uncle used to go to the Hunt with her. She used a carriage and two horses for local expeditions but if it was important visitors coming they used the coach and four horses. I think it was difficult for Lord and Lady Arundell living in the East Wing with the old Dowager in the main part.

Life was very primitive - we had oil lamps and candles. There weren't any bathrooms. They used to have to carry water for hip baths (that was before my time) and we used brass bed warmers. We used to put boiling water in them and rub them over the sheets.

My sister and I both worked at the Castle because, when my mother died, my dad went to live in the coachman's rooms so my sister could look after him. Life was really great. Lord and Lady Arundell treated us all as part of their family. We shared their joys and we shared their sorrows. Lady Arundell was like a mother to me.

My duties mainly involved waiting at table. Mrs. Harrison was cook. In the mornings we'd get up between half past six and seven and I'd take Lord Arundell his morning tea at seven. Then I'd set the breakfast. Lady Arundell would often have breakfast in her room if there were no visitors and his Lordship as well. They were very different breakfasts from nowadays - there'd always be a choice, fish or bacon or eggs and sausages.

The family entertained a lot, especially at weekends. John would come down from London every Friday. He always slept in the attic in a room near us. He liked to be on his own with his dog Mike. I remember Sir Henry and Lady Hoare from Stourhead. I was only 14 and Lady Hoare came dressed all in black with a great big hat and a black veil. I thought, how on earth would she eat her lunch! I took them up to the drawing room and announced them and rushed back to Mrs. Harrison in the kitchen and said: 'how will she eat her lunch?' She said: 'Don't be so stupid, she'll lift her veil'. The Duke and Duchess of Somerset came quite a lot and Colonel Benett Stanford from Pyt House. He was a real character. If he was invited to lunch, his wife wouldn't come. He was very embarrassing. If he knew someone important was coming to lunch with Lord and Lady Arundell, he'd wear a boot lace across his waistcoat instead of his watch chain and his shoes done up with binder string.

When Isabel was having her birthday one year, we had a tea party. I took in the cake with candles alight - John Benett Stanford was there and he was most embarrassing. He said, 'I wish my old woman was here, she's partial to a bit of cake'. And when Isabel was expecting Patrick, her eldest son, we opened the front door one morning and there was a huge pram with an L-plate back and front. John Benett had put it there. He'd give people a lift in his car and take them miles around, give them half a crown, put them out and tell them to walk home. He was a right odd character.

When I'd done breakfast, I'd have to clean the dining room and all the silver. I never washed plates and dishes but I was responsible for all the silver. My sister and Mrs. Austridge were the housemaids. It was also my duty to clean the staircase and, of course, the black and white marble floor at the bottom. By that time it was lunch and I had to change from a blue dress with white cap and apron to a green dress with coffee coloured cap and apron. It was the thing to do in those days and it seems a world away now.

From lunchtime onwards there wasn't much to do till afternoon tea and then between 7.30 and 8.0 there was always dinner. It was a grand occasion. Lady Arundell always wore evening dress when entertaining and I can see Isabel now coming down the stairs wearing a red velvet dress and fox fur around the sleeves. Lady Arundell usually wore white satin and a tiara. Blanche was living away in London. They had six or seven courses for dinner, soup and fish and meat and all that. After dinner, it depended on whether there were visitors when I got to go to bed. We used to have a lot of visitors and then it would be 10.30 or 11 o'clock. We always had six or seven visitors every weekend so we had some very late nights. We had to work very hard but the family treated us so well we all stayed as long as we could. I started on five shillings a week and any tips from visitors. We were allowed one half day off a week. I had to be back by 9.30 or 10. If we wanted to go to Salisbury - it was a big treat - we had to ask permission so we could leave before lunch.

I remember the four-poster beds - there were seven of them. There was only one bathroom when I started. Water was carried to the rooms of the guests but that was the housemaid's job. I laid out the men's clothes at night ready for dinner and turned back the beds. It wasn't easy - we had to use oil lamps. Mrs. Harrison used to fill them. I cleaned the lamp glasses. We had to carry them wherever we went. There were lovely silver candlesticks on the dining room table. It was quite dangerous really. I used to have to light the lamps on the staircase. It seems funny now to see us all carrying lamps around the house. We always took a lamp up to bed with us.

Christmas was a great occasion at the Castle. We started off with midnight Mass and then the family would all gather together. There was always a big family party. On Christmas night, after dinner, we assembled in the large dining room upstairs where Isabel and John had put up a huge Christmas tree and the crib.

We were always asked what we wanted for Christmas and the gift we asked for we were given besides other gifts from all the family. Birthdays were always special occasions as well. In one of the anterooms the presents were put on a table behind a screen and then after breakfast the family would all assemble and the presents would be given out. The staff were all included when the cake was cut.

Lady Arundell was a great person. She was tall, well built, quite regal; very kind to us all and mother-like, not one to tell you off unless there was an occasion to do so. We were all very happy. Lord Arundell was a bit strict. I remember they used to have huge fires, logs put across the irons and I'll never forget he once rang the bell for me in the dining room and I went in. We used bellows as long as a sofa and they'd caught alight in the fire. He blamed me for it. He said 'Look what you've done, you've set fire to them'. I said, 'Beg pardon M'Lord, I think you've done it'. I think he liked country things like shooting and fishing more than the company of society.

Blanche was a very pretty and popular person. She used to organise 'bath races' - going down the stone stairs between attic and first floor in a hip-bath! It was very dangerous and if she or Isabel didn't pull on the banister at the right time, they crashed into the wall with the bath on top of them. They scored a bull if they turned the corner and landed in the gallery. Blanche and Isabel used to test their boyfriends' courage in this sport. It had to stop eventually because their father objected to the noise and Lady Arundell thought the gallery would be damaged.

I remember John very well. We all watched him grow up. We had a day's holiday for his 21st birthday and they held a big party with an ox roast in the Castle grounds. He was a very nice young man, always interested in everything on the estate. He was very keen on the history of Wardour - he would allow no-one into his Muniment room - it was very special to him.

But he was modest. After his father's death, I had to take a message. I said 'M'Lord' I'll never forget how he went really pink. He loved to be out in the country riding around the estate. He was tall, like his mother, tall, slim and handsome.

Isabel was great fun. She was super to have around, a real tomboy. She would go to collect the hamper from Harrods at Tisbury station every week in the old Jowlett car and disappear for the rest of the day - she'd gone off with her boyfriend. We all thought the world of her.

Another great occasion was when we made our first communion. We always had breakfast in the convent and Easter eggs were hidden for us in the garden. Then there was Corpus Christi. It was a marvellous day. People came from miles around and the chapel was overflowing. On Maundy Thursday we had a special celebration in the chapel - the altar of repose. Lady Arundell used to give Mrs. Austridge the family jewels to put on a satin cushion on top of the tabernacle. The sacrament was never left during the day - people put their names down for half an hour each.

I remember John going away to war. I polished the buttons on his uniform. My two cousins went with him in the Wiltshire Regiment. One of my cousins was killed before they went overseas and then John was taken prisoner. I remember well taking the first letter from him to Lady Arundell. Then later came the news that he was coming home. His mother had an arch with "welcome home" put up over the gate, but it was too late. He died at Chester. I don't think his mother ever got over the shock.

After that, Mr. & Mrs. Talbot came into the estate and they had to change their name to Arundell. They were very nice people. He had all the cottages on the estate modernised. I was still living in the Castle in the coachman's room. One Christmas, just after the war, Mr. Arundell came down with a gift and he said 'Martina, is there anything you want'? I said, 'I'd love a small Christmas tree', and he got us one. When I had my son, the first person to come and see me with a gift was Mrs. Arundell. They were a very kind family.

Thinking back, it wasn't at all creepy living in the Castle. You'd get lost if I tried to take you round all the rooms. I had a room at the very top in the attic, up three flights of stairs. There was no heating in the bedrooms. You just put on extra clothes in winter. We were never frightened living there. I'd like to go back to those days.

The thing was, we knew we couldn't have everything so we didn't crave for things like today's youngsters. We used to have to wait. They were great days, tremendous fun".



From left to right: Stephen Mullins; bailiff to the Dowager Lady Arundell, the Hon. Blanche and the Hon. Isabel Arundell with their dog Bruce; Martina Mullins (Hoskins) photographed in the rose garden with the summer house behind; Bede Ridley from Ansty who called in to do odd jobs on his way home from school.

Coming of Age

The following report appeared in a local newspaper in July 1928:

"The celebrations of the coming of age of the Hon. John Arundell, son of Lord and Lady Arundell of Wardour and heir to the title, were held at Wardour yesterday.

The Hon. John Arundell attained his 21st birthday on June 18th. At that time he was at Oxford University and the public celebrations were postponed until yesterday. A most unassuming young man, he is held in high esteem by the whole countryside and evidence of this was forthcoming yesterday morning when he received from the tradesmen and inhabitants of Tisbury, a silver cigarette box with his initials and the Arundell crest inscribed on the cover. The presentation was made privately in the drawing room of the Castle on behalf of the subscribers by Messrs. W.W. Kendall, F. Gatehouse and A. Andow. The Hon. John suitably acknowledged the gift and assured them it would be one of his most prized possessions".

At one o'clock the tenants of the estate, numbering 40, were the guests of the Rt. Hon. Anne Lucy, Lady Arundell of Wardour, at a luncheon in commemoration of the event. Her Ladyship herself was unable to be present but was represented in the chair by Mr. Robert Lush, the estate accountant. The Hon. John Arundell did not attend but reserved his public expression of thanks until later in the day. Immediately afterwards, there was another luncheon of the staff and tradesmen. For this, the bailiff Mr. Stephen Mullins presided and here again were expressions of good wishes for the health and prosperity of the heir of Wardour.

At the garden party in the Castle grounds during the afternoon, given by Lord and Lady Arundell, there were 500 guests comprising all the residents of the surrounding countryside. There were stage performances and selections were played by the Ansty Band.

The presentation of the first class sporting gun from the tenants was made at the garden party in the evening. Mr. F. Burt, in handing the gun and an illuminated address to the Hon. John Arundell, said it was a very pleasant task that he had to perform.

The Hon John Arundell, accepting the present, said the occasion demanded more oratory than he could command but he would like, in a few simple words, to them how deeply moved and touched he was by their wonderful generosity.

He would treasure the gift all the days of his life. Nor would he ever forget the wonderful kindness, goodwill and sympathy of which that was a unique expression. He would like to thank his kind friends at Tisbury for their most lovely gift, the cigarette box. He could only say that he appreciated the kind thought which prompted it. He had always wanted a cigarette box but he had never seen anything as beautiful or elegant. He wanted to tell them how happy he was to be there that day - the place of all places in the world where he most wanted to be (loud applause) and the people of all people in the world that he most wanted to be with. His heart had always been at Wardour.

As a little boy at school and as a man at the University, his thoughts had always had a way of straying back and wandering round Wardour and picking out Wardour faces. So it would always be in years to come. Wherever he might be, his thoughts would fly there and the events of that morning with Tisbury and of that afternoon with Wardour would always remain in his memory.

Lady Arundell said she felt she must tell them how gratified she was and how deeply touched by their magnificent presents to her son. Mr. Hugh Morrison M.P. in a few words added his good wishes for the health and prosperity of the heir of Wardour and the proceedings closed by Lord Arundell endorsing the thanks expressed by the Hon. John and Lady Arundell.

Three plays were given by the Shaston Drama Club and later in the evening dancing took place in the grounds".



Air view of Wardour Castle showing the North Front, taken in 1934. The smoke on the left comes from the kitchen. This was so enormous that one of the Arundell family had her first riding lessons around the kitchen table. Park Pond can be seen in the distance.

The Last Lord Arundell

Cecil Turner, a friend of the family, wrote this in 1945:

“John Francis Arundell was born in London on 18th June 1907 and was baptized at the Church of the Holy Redeemer Chelsea on 23rd June, his God Parents being the Dowager Lady Arundell of Wardour and Colonel George Segrave. At that time, his parents lived in the East Wing of Wardour Castle and in the beautiful surrounds of the old family home, their three children passed the early years of their lives. The mission at Wardour was then in the hands of the Society of Jesus and some of the priests in residence were amongst John's earliest instructors; he was a gentle, fair haired little fellow, much beloved by the tenantry of the estate, devoted to his home with its park and woodlands and the religious teaching he received there. The inspirations aroused by the family traditions and the natural beauties of the district exercised a permanent influence in developing and forming his character.

He was educated at Hodder and Stonyhurst, beginning his time there in May 1916. Although there were no very conspicuous incidents in his school career, it was a time of steady, competent progress; he was a member of the Debating Society and it could be argued from the part he took in the Prize debates that later on he would be a useful member of the House of Lords. The influence of his young life at Wardour and of his years at Stonyhurst implanted in him a deep devotion to the Society of Jesus which remained with him all through his life.

He matriculated at New College Oxford in October 1926 and took his BA degree in 1929. His favourite recreation at Oxford was rowing and he rowed in the Second College Eight in 1927, 1928 and 1929. On leaving Oxford, he wished to join the Army but this ambition was negated by the Dowager Lady Arundell, on whom he was dependent for an allowance, and by her wish, he took an agricultural course at Cambridge.

After leaving there he worked for some years on the Stock Exchange in London. During this time he kept up his rowing activities becoming a member of the Thames Rowing Club for which, during the years 1932-1935, he rowed in as many as 25 races at Henley and various other regattas.

His father, immediately after his succession to the family estates in 1934, handed them over to John who supervised their management strenuously. He knew every acre of the Wiltshire property and twice visited the small portion of the Cornish property in the possession of the family. He had a considerable knowledge of forestry and the young plantations around Wardour Castle testify not only to his acumen but also to his forethought for the future of the estate. He was always happiest when at his beautiful home where the history and traditions of the place appealed to his religious and literary sense; the patient and accurate work he did in bringing into order the scattered family archives is a permanent testimony to his literary capacity.

On the death of his father in March 1939, he became the 16th Lord Arundell of Wardour and on 13th June of that year, he took his seat in the House of Lords, being introduced by Lord Acton. He was also a Justice of the Peace for Wiltshire, sitting on the Tisbury Bench.

Already the war cloud was gathering over Europe and John, who had previously obtained a commission in the Wiltshire Regiment (Territorial), prompt always to obey the call of duty, volunteered on the outbreak of war for service abroad. He was for a time quartered at Salisbury training his men, but in the latter part of that year, went to France.

In March 1940 he came home for a short spell of leave, in radiant health and spirits, walking up to Wardour from the station in brilliant moonlight on the night of 26th. Finding the house locked up, he contrived to effect an entry through the Chapel and the tribunes without waking his mother, though he had to pass through her room in the effort, but characteristically he never revealed to anyone the secret of how had got in. On 1st April he left for France and his last visit to his beloved home was ended.

He fought with great gallantry in France but was wounded when fighting near Douai in May 1940 and taken prisoner. After that, his life was passed in various prison camps in Germany; he was at Mainz from the date of his capture till July 1940, then at Titmoning near Munich and at Warburgh - from which he attempted to escape - and from July 1943 till April 1944 he was imprisoned at Colditz, 25 miles southeast of Leipzig, a punishment fortress with heavily barred windows, used in peace-time as a lunatic asylum. Here 1500 prisoners were kept in accommodation fit for 600 with a courtyard 50 yards by 20 as the only place for exercise. In such surroundings, his health broke down, tuberculosis developed and he was in the sick bay there from April to June 1944. He was moved to Elsterhorst, a tuberculosis sanatorium, where he remained till he was repatriated in September.

When his health began to fail, he was heroically determined that no details of his illness should reach his mother and sisters, so although in June they heard some rumours, the cheery postcards he wrote led them to believe that though his condition, added to the long period of captivity he had endured, might lead to his repatriation, only care and time would be needed to ensure his complete restoration to health.

When on 14th September a telegram reached Lady Arundell saying he would be in England during the following week, a wave of elation swept over the Wardour estate. The tenants started erecting triumphal arches and all were preparing to give their beloved friend and landlord a rousing welcome.

On 18th September, Lady Arundell received a telegram informing her that he was seriously ill in hospital at Chester. She and her daughters travelled through the night to his bedside; he knew his mother and was able to express his joy at seeing her, but he soon lapsed into unconsciousness. Early on the morning of 25th September, he died.

On 28th September he was laid to rest in the family vault near the High Altar of the Chapel at Wardour in the presence of a most mournful congregation which, besides many relatives and neighbours, included practically the whole of the tenantry on the estate.

Later on, we were to hear from his fellow prisoners how captivity had brought out all that was noblest in his character; how, in all the trials and bitterness through which they had to pass, his spirit remained unbroken, his humour and wit encouraged them, and above all, his Faith upheld and strengthened them. In this connection, I am permitted to cite a letter received by Lady Arundell from one who was immured with him:

'Along with everyone else who knew John in prison, I was shattered to hear of his death. Please accept the heartfelt sympathy of a messmate of John's for 3½ years in your great loss. How irreplaceable your loss is I know, having got to know dear John very well in this rather unpleasant existence. It is so seldom in life that one has the great fortune and pleasure to know a really good person, a person about whom one never hears a bad word spoken and whom everyone, great and small, genuinely likes and admires in every way. It is my good luck to have met one of these, John, in this life, and added good fortune to have had the honour to share one's time as a prisoner with. I expect John told you of our little party of eight who have managed to stick together all this time. It was he who had a wise word for the younger of us, a word of encouragement when things were rather black, and his enormous good spirits to help and cheer us on. As you so well know, his courage was unlimited and that is what makes the blow so much harder to bear, as he never said anything to us up to the time he left here. This last word of comfort I can give you, that I feel a far better Christian for having known John, as his example is always before me of the nicest and most upright man I shall ever know'.

The title created on 4th May 1605 died with him and the direct male line of the Arundell family became extinct. The 1st Lord rests in the Parish church at Tisbury, where the helmet he wore at the battle of Gran and in many other conflicts still adorns the wall of the Chancel; the 2nd Lord, who died fighting for his King in the Civil War and his wife, the heroic defender of Wardour Castle against Cromwell's hordes, lie there too, and the last Lord, as brave as they were, rests not far from a long line of brave ancestors.

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