

St. Clement's Church, Powderham, August 28, 2015

- This has been a hard, hard week – I am too young to write a eulogy to my father; he died far too soon.
- The support has been remarkable, and my dear mother has received a torrent of wonderful letters, pouring forth many tributes to my father's warmth, generosity, wit, friendship and intelligence, and sharing with us stories and a myriad of memories. Thank you for those, and for all the support at this turbulent time – I cannot do justice to them all, to all of your memories, or to him, but I will say what I can.
- How can you capture in minutes a life lived so full by a man who touched so many? I sat at his desk in the Estate Office on Monday evening considering this while seated in his lovingly worn and well-used chair. The bells were ringing out across the marshes, as Kenton's bell ringers enjoyed their weekly rehearsal; the birds seemed to sing along, and it struck me that it was an evening Daddy would cherish, and then I realized that all that lay out the open window was the tribute to him.
- All was peaceful, as the sun set:
  - The Castle was closed, after another busy day of visitors to the wonderful attraction that my father has developed – and to which so many of you are devoted.
  - Swallows and house-martins flitted about the parapets of the newly restored North tower – over 600 years old, his repairs make it good for another 600.
  - Pigeons cooed in the trees above the well-tended Pleasure Grounds next to the Stables House; the happiest of homes that he and my mother created for Rebecca, Nell, Camilla and I to enjoy an idyllic childhood.
  - Mallard quacked on the pond in front of the house, the signature landscaping that was one of my father's earliest projects and brought him so much pleasure, from boating to shooting coots for soup from his loo as we grew up.
  - In the Walled Garden, rescued by him from total dereliction, Maria and her menagerie of birds squeaked and squawked after another day delighting children.
  - Amidst the trees and rhododendrons of the American Woodland Garden ran the recently released young pheasant, happily ignorant

of both the beautiful landscape that my father rescued and restored, and the promise of a fast-approaching shooting season that he adored.

- Atop the hill, the raven croaked about the parapets of the Belvedere: not long ago it was a crumbling ruin, strangled by the woods; now it stands proud, capped and weather-proofed – a beacon to the thousands that see it of Powderham and of what my father achieved.
  - Below the Belvedere rolled away the Estate, in the midst of a damp but healthy harvest, with hedgerows heaving with life – sloe berries (it will be a good year for sloe gin), blackberries, Jersey tiger moths – headlands and marshes ready for partridge, snipe and widgeon.
  - Through the rolling fields wound the River Kenn, the flight path for Swanny, the single mute swan, making its way from the Estuary, past my father's favourite Sawmill Marsh (scene of many a sinking, principally of Michael Watney, but also of every new underkeeper at Powderham), over the tops of the cricket bat willows at Kenton Mill, to my father's pond in front of Wilsworthy, lovingly dug for his dotage amidst the apple orchard, and enjoyed for far too few years.
  - And within Wilsworthy itself...his wonderfully warm and welcoming home, where even the guard dog Tansy sounds inviting, nestled his most precious flock – his beloved Diana (forty-eight years his sweetheart); Beebs, Nelly and Billa with their devoted husbands, and the happiest, healthiest gaggle of Grandchildren a man could ever wish for.
- My father was not a proud man, and he was never one to show off; but I think if St. Peter asks him at the Pearly Gates to say what he achieved during his 73 years, my father could point him to Powderham today with considerable satisfaction. Indeed, if he were a sporting man (and we all know he was) he might even throw down a challenge to St. Peter to find him a corner of Heaven as perfect for him as this small corner of Devon.
  - Remember too that it was not always this way – this wonderful Estate with all its treasure and promise was by no means a foregone conclusion. Indeed, there were many times during my father's life where this remarkable legacy seemed unlikely.
  - Think back to his birthday, the 5<sup>th</sup> of May 1942:

- My grandmother, Venetia, gave birth to him at home, in the State Bed.
- Exeter was ablaze from a horrific night of bombing, the Baedeker Blitz, designed by the German High Command to destroy England's most picturesque cities and to terrify their inhabitants.
- The depleted staff at Powderham huddled fearfully in the cellars.
- The young Earl (my grandfather, Christopher) was far, far away, fighting in the deserts of North Africa; he was shortly to receive a bullet through his helmet, losing part of his ear, and to suffer traumas about which he could never bring himself to speak when he finally did come home – a stranger to his young children.
- Add to this the triple death duties Christopher inherited at the tender age of nineteen, a nation bruised and battered by war, unable to afford, and often hostile to, its private heritage.
- The prospects for Powderham in my father's early years were bleak and there was every expectation that it would go the way of many neighbouring great houses: the National Trust, or even sale or abandonment
- But it did not, and the path from there to here is a real tale of triumph over adversity, of brave decisions, of determination and dedication to Powderham, and of team work – with my father a constant, charming, guiding steward throughout.
- The Powderham that we see today is, in many ways, very different from the Powderham of 1942 – it is a vibrant, modern enterprise, presenting AJ and me with a host of opportunities. And yet in many, many ways, it is the same, and those similarities would surely give my father as much, if not more pleasure, than the changes:
  - Powderham is still run as a traditional English estate – evenly balanced between mixed farming types, woodland and property;
  - The Castle and Deer Park look the same today as they did then – same as 200 years ago;
  - The language of our prayers today is that ordained in the 1600s;
  - We shoot midweek;
  - And most importantly, many of you gathered here today are from families that have gathered for many previous Earl's funerals:

Mortimer, Williams, Yandle, Hitchcock, Burrington and many others with long affiliations with Powderham.

- It strikes me that the final, the most eloquent, and yet unspoken tribute to my father is here...while he loved Powderham Church, its history, its resilience against the modernising forces of Cromwell in the Civil War, its unwavering commitment to the Book Common Prayer Book; above all that history and tradition, he loved people, his family and community – it is all of you that provide the greatest tribute.
- Whatever I say here today, it is in your hearts and memories that Hugh, Daddy, Lord Devon and Grumpy lives on; as it says in the service sheet, “to live in hearts we leave behind is not to die.”
- Thank you – each of you – for being here, for holding my father in your hearts and for all your contributions to making his life a great and a happy life for which we all can be thankful.