

MAN, MYTH, LEGEND

Carolina Beresford pays tribute to the incredible life of a rare kind of gentleman:
Lord Patrick Beresford, 1934–2020

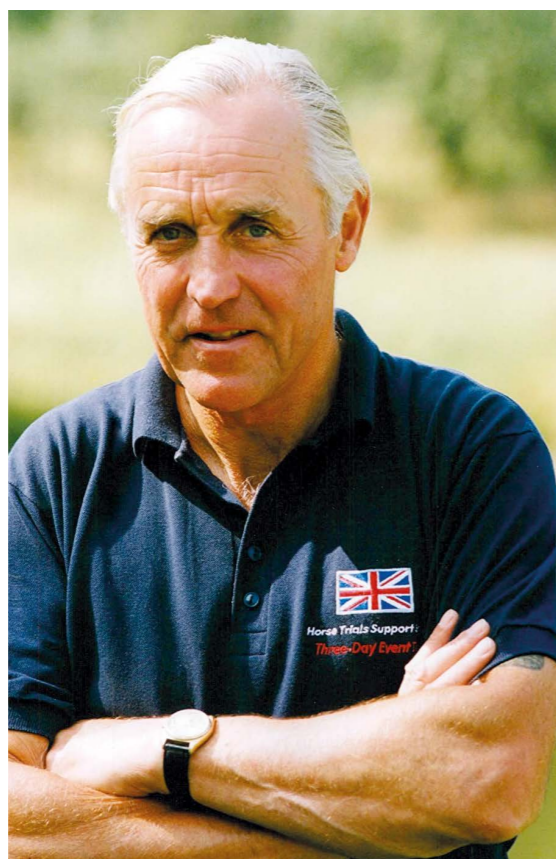
To tell the unedited story of Patrick's 85 years would require volumes. His life was full of military duties and deployments, medals and mentions, regiments and races – and that's even before the polo, the parties, and the pretty ladies.

The second son of the seventh Marquess of Waterford, Patrick was an enthusiastic amateur jockey until his military commitments pulled him away from the track. He trained at Sandhurst, joined the Royal Horse Guards, and transferred to the No 1 (Guards) Independent Parachute Company. There, he took part in deployments to Cyprus (1963) and Borneo (1964), receiving a General Service Medal for the latter. He was later promoted to Major with the R Squadron of the 22 Special Air Service Regiment, where he joined deployments to the Mid and Far East (1966–1974).

Patrick was continuously enchanted by equestrian sports, and from 1985 to 1992 he took on the role of Chef d'équipe of the British Eventing Team. But before that, he made his mark in the polo world, both on and off the field. In 1954, he was picked up by the great benefactor Archie David, who mounted him until his death in 1972, and with whom he represented Friar Park in low- and medium-goal tournaments.

Patrick then graduated to the high goal, representing Windsor Park alongside Prince Philip. Together they won the British Open Gold Cup twice (1966 and 1969). When Prince Philip founded the Household Brigade Polo Club in 1955 – later renamed Guards Polo Club – he named Patrick the first polo manager.

I could go on listing Patrick's awards and achievements, but in all honesty, none of those things come to mind when I think of him. He was 55 years my senior, so I never



AN IMPORTANT FIGURE IN SPORT AND SOCIETY BUT HE WAS CHARMING AND PLAYFUL, TOO

Left: Patrick Beresford. Opposite, from top: Patrick with HRH The Queen 2019 at Guards; left to right: the Viscount Cowdray, Lt. Col Tatham, Patrick, Col John Lakin and HRH Duke of Edinburgh, 1968 at Cowdray

knew him as a military man. The man I loved was warm and funny and kind. He was an important figure in sport and society, but he was charming and playful, too.

No matter where I landed, rumours of Patrick's past found their way to me. Did I know, one Chilean whispered, that my great-uncle was the inspiration behind the James Bond character? Was I aware, an Irishman gossiped, that Patrick had been close to marrying Princess Margaret? Had I heard about the time, one Englishwoman laughed, Patrick, as a dashing young man, drove into a prestigious girls boarding school

and took his love interest out for a spin? Whether fact or fiction, the only thing that can be said with certainty is that Patrick left a lasting impression on countless people around the world – a phenomena verified by the number of stories that abound.

The last Royal Ascot Week Lunch I attended at Fairview Cottage, Patrick's home, was four years ago. It was a damp summer day, with fitful showers punctuating the afternoon. We ate his favourite menu of smoked salmon and coronation chicken in the garden marquee, before retreating inside to catch the Royal Procession.

IMAGESOFPOLO.COM: MICHAEL CHEVIS POLO ARCHIVE

Fifteen people gathered around the television screen, clutching cups of tea for warmth, with the papers laid out to show the race cards. I don't think Patrick was happier than in those moments, surrounded by his friends and family from far and wide, discussing bloodlines and bookies and bets. But then again, I recently saw a photograph of him dancing shirtless between two hula girls in Hawaii, so I guess that must have been a highlight, too.

To say we will miss him is an understatement of the crudest kind. His warmth and wisdom enraptured all who crossed his path. His spirit, so tangle in life, now shines brighter still, eternally crystallised in the memories of those who knew and loved him.

