

## County leaders pay tribute to true friend

The Chairman and Leader of Hampshire County Council have paid tribute to Lady Charlotte Bonham Carter, who died on December 22nd at the age of 96.

Chairman, Councillor Maurice Jones, said: "She was an extremely gracious lady with enormously wide interests. I shall always remember her courtesy and how she never allowed ill-health to deter her from attending the County Council's social occasions."

"She was a generous supporter of our archives, giving considerable numbers of her family papers."

Councillor Freddie Emery-Wallis, Leader of the County Council, said: "Lady Bonham Carter was a great figure of Hampshire; a great supporter of the county, its institutions and the arts."

"In the County Council's Centenary Year, she attended a number of our celebrations as the surviving link with our foundation."

"She was the grand-daughter of William Wickham, High Sheriff of Hampshire, who took the chair at the first meeting of the County Council in 1889 and called for nominations for Chairman. Lord Basing became the Chairman and William Wickham Vice-Chairman from 1889-1897."

Lady Bonham Carter's great-great-grandfather, another William Wickham, was Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department from 1798 and Chief Secretary for Ireland from 1802-4.

He was responsible for operating a largely unofficial extensive spy network throughout Europe during the French wars and even before he was Chief Secretary for Ireland, was involved in detailed correspondence about that country and its troubles, receiving the last letter written by the patriot, Robert Emmet, before his execution in 1803.

Wickham's extensive form one of the treasures of the Record Office, deposited by Lady Bonham Carter between 1949 and the present as her astonishing Wyck Place near Alton more and more during the years.

In order to secure access to the collection, she generously loaned the papers outright gift to the Council in 1906.

She was a tireless of the arts, in Hampshire as nationally. She was a Vice-President of the Hampshire Archives Trust, created in 1966, an active part in its proposals and proposing votes to speakers which made that she had listened and interest to all.

She also supported the Cathedral and Hampshire Field Club, as many other local bodies.

The County Archivist, Rosemary Dunhill, recalled Bonham Carter telling there had been many since she was a child every one for the better.

Lady Bonham Carter remembered her first and the bliss of just and leaving it, with to tie it up or leave to eat.

It was this very life of life which kept spite of her frailties, as well as interest in people in bringing them

## Lady Charlotte Bonham Carter; a full life

Lady Charlotte Bonham Carter, who has died at the age of 96, was one of the most remarkable women of her generation.

Born in London in August, 1893, she was educated at Eastbourne and Dresden and became a debutante in 1912. At the outbreak of the First World War she joined the Foreign Office and at one stage worked for MI5, during which time she was involved in the search for Lenin in the days before the Russian Revolution.

After hostilities, she was assigned to the British Delegation at the Paris peace talks.

She was a patron of the arts and in 1926 became a founding director of the Ballet Rambert. She was married in 1927 to Sir Edgar Bonham Carter.

She gained a pilot's licence in the '30s and during the Second World War served in the WAAF, being commissioned in 1941, working in the vital photographic interpretation section. She also served in the Ministry of Economic Warfare.

In 1947 she inherited Wyck Place at Binsted, near Alton, where she became a dedicated gardener and farmer. She opened her garden regularly to the public, particularly in the early spring when the aconites were in flower.

She became a County Councillor and was for a time Chairman of the Hampshire Planning Committee.

Often eccentric in manner and dress, she would sometimes appear in Alton in a chauffeur-driven Morris 1000, presumably preferring to leave the limousine in the garage. She was a contributor to many charities and gave many of her treasures to museums.

## Charlotte Bonham Carter

Lady Charlotte Bonham Carter was the very stuff of eccentricity and her purview the eclectic and the diverse. She was the nature of a lion, writes Patrick Vickers, 28 December, [Oates, 30 December]. She would be found viewing the Edinburgh during the night and till her last years a first night in London. And it was possible to catch the last tube from the South Bank in just seen a celebration of Turkish history in word

On such occasions she would have conversations about Ananias and quite soon an invitation would be issued to attend the Anglo-Turkish Committee. She endowed the Carter Memorial Lecture of the Council of the British Society of Archaeology in Iraq. At meetings, when financial matters were discussed, she would stir from an apparent remark: "Mr Chairman, £2,000 be of any help?" Her generosity was well known. After a hectic week she felt the need for sleep in church she would invite her neighbour to her when the collection was found. When the dish was

proffered she would hold up a hand as she wrote a cheque rather than miss the chance to donate.

Her range of interests was extraordinary and as archaeologists and art historians found new areas they would often be surprised to discover that Charlotte had already left her tell-tale sign — as patron of some supporting institution preserving or exploring some worthwhile facet of human creativity.

Her London dinner parties were legendary for often after introducing her guests and sitting them down she would race off to a first night at the Ballet Rambert leaving her party at the flat in full swing. Whether it was Hittites or modern dance her fascination with people was unceasing.

She lived amidst a profusion of pictures and drawings which lined the walls of her house in Hampshire and were stacked five deep along the corridors demonstrating a love of art beyond her own capacity to house it. Her eccentricity was well demonstrated by her insistence that at her husband's funeral he be borne aloft a farm carriage to Binsted Church in the most torrential downpour for two and a half miles. That act of rural ceremony so poignant, so memorable to all in that procession was the essence of Charlotte Bonham Carter.

## Charlotte Bonham Carter

GO VICKERS's obituary of Charlotte Bonham Carter [28 December] was wholly delightful as is that inimitable character, writes Ruth Daniel. May I cast light on those "special duties" from 1941 to 1944?

I had the pleasure of serving with her at the Central (Photographic) Interpretation Unit at Medmenham in Buckinghamshire. We were a motley bunch of academics, artists, musicians, writers (there come to mind Freddie Ashton, Dirk Bogarde, Stuart Piggott, Villiers David, Humphrey Searle, Ann McKnight-Kaufer, Robin Orr, Sarah Churchill), into which she fitted with

zest. Practically all of us had been commissioned directly, with no service in the ranks, and were treated with tolerant amusement by our CO. There came the day when a new CO arrived who did things by the book. He demanded a parade. I, who had first served in the ranks, explained to my puzzled colleagues what he meant. A little while after some sort of assembly had been achieved on the tarmac there arrived Charlotte, panting a little, string shopping-bag in hand.

"My dear," she said to our bemused NCO-in-charge, "I've found some tomatoes in Marlow. Isn't that wonderful?"

CHARLOTTE Bonham Carter was both an inveterate party-goer and party-giver. She was also an inveterate collector, traveller, attender of opera and of concerts, and so deftly did she move between her selected locations and functions that it seemed she was often spotted at a number of different events at exactly the same time.

Frail in appearance, yet nimble of foot, she wore gipsy-like clothes with a scarf round her head to disguise a bad wound from a car accident in the early 1970s. From this tiny figure there emerged a confident and powerful voice that could discourse on almost any topic presented to her. She was much loved by a wide circle of friends, some of whom met in her orbit and some of whom did not.

Lady Bonham Carter was the only surviving child of Col Lewis Ogilvy CB, who was born in 1840 (more than a year earlier than Edward VII), the grandson of Rear-Admiral Sir William Ogilvy, 8th Bt, a distant relative of the Earl of Airliie. He served in the Egyptian Campaign of 1882 and in Sudan,

1884. Her only brother died of wounds received in the Great War, thus Charlotte became the heiress of her mother, Lucy Wickham, of Binsted Wyck, near Alton. The Wickhams were a younger branch of the ancient house of Wyckham, of Swalcliffe, Oxon, who sported an ancestor, Robert, listed in the Domesday Book. Each spring Charlotte gave a series of Sunday lunch parties at Wyck in the aconyte season.

Her career included working as a VAD nurse in the First World War, and then serving from 1916 to 1919 with Military Intelligence in the War Office. She was on the secretariat of the Peace Conference in 1919 and served in the Second World War as an instrument mechanic in the WAAF. The late Viva King recalled:

Just before the war she bravely trained for Air Defence and took a course in flying. On one occasion, she turned up rather late for lunch, still in her flying kit, and said how much she missed her horn



in the air — she was an erratic motor driver.

From 1941 to 1944 she was an officer on special duties. Between 1944 and 1949 she was with the Ministry of Economic Warfare and then the Foreign Office.

Elected a member of Paddington Borough Council in 1934, and Alton Rural District Council in 1949, she

was also a Director of the Ballet Rambert.

In 1926 she married Sir Edgar Bonham Carter KCMG CIE, a barrister 23 years older than she. He was legal secretary to the Sudan Government from 1899 to 1917, an official Member of the Governor-General of Sudan's Council from 1910 to 1917 and later Judicial Adviser in Mesopotamia. He was the master of the penal code: as Stewart Perowne put it, "If a country wanted a penal code run up, Sir Edgar was their man." A keen rugby player, he was also a Chairman of the British School of Archaeology in Iraq. He died in 1956, aged 86. In a family of 11 brothers and one sister, Sir Edgar was an elder brother of Sir Maurice Bonham Carter who married Lady Violet Asquith, the Prime Minister's daughter. Interestingly Charlotte's father-in-law was born in 1827, during the reign of George IV.

Many anecdotes are told of Charlotte's frenzied social activity and her great zest for life and art. She

was the finest example of one who would travel by any means available and at any time of day or night to reach her engagement. Sometimes she missed a connection and confessed in her eighties that the waiting-room at Milan station was the most comfortable place to be stranded. She was pleased when Lady Diana Cooper said to her: "No party is complete without you."

Charlotte celebrated her ninetieth birthday in July 1983 at the Royal Academy, amongst a gathering of old who were young at heart and young who were old at heart. She greeted her guests dressed in silver and blue and wearing a pale turquoise headscarf. She explained that this came from Turkey: "My dear, they are really for men. But this is the most unmanlike. They cost nothing and if you pull one thread the whole thing falls to pieces."

Hugo Vickers

Charlotte Helen Ogilvy, born 22 August 1893, married 1926 Sir Edgar Bonham Carter (died 1956), died 22 December 1989.