Sir John Hervey-Bathurst

Banker who devoted much of his energy to restoring his family’s decaying period house and grounds to its late 18th-century grandeur

Sir John Hervey-Bathurst of Somborne Park was a Hampshire baronet who appeared to have stepped out of a novel by Jane Austen or Anthony Trollope, but had no difficulty in coping with the modern world. During a distinguished career as a banker, he found time to restore his family home, which he inherited when it was almost derelict.

Frederick John Charles Gordon Hervey-Bathurst was born in 1934, the son of the future sixth baronet and his wife Maureen Gordon. The family descended from a younger son of Thomas Hervey, 1st Earl of Bristol. The first baronet, Sir Felton Hervey-Bathurst, was a hussar and ADC to the Duke of Wellington who brought Wellington’s despatches with the news of Waterloo to the Prince Regent.

After Eton John Hervey-Bathurst did his National Service as a subaltern in the Grenadier Guards, the fourth generation of his family to serve with the regiment, his grandfather having fought at Omdurman and his great-grandfather in the Crimea. At Trinity College, Cambridge, John Hervey-Bathurst read economics and simultaneously belonged to the university’s Conservative Association and Labour Club “to see what each side was thinking” — gleefully outraging members of both in the process.

In the 19th century his family had used the house as a shooting box.

In 1957 he joined Lazard Bros in an era when trainee merchant bankers types like him set out on long loan agreements far into the evening before rushing round to a partner’s home to get them signed — and interrupting the port. When he retired from Lazard as a managing director in 1991 he had steered the banking division through the challenges of computers, modern risk management and the “Big Bang.” Clients liked doing business with him because of his love of good food and wine, and ability to speak knowledgeably on many subjects, while he was admired by those who worked for him for his in-tellectual curiosity, outspokenness, and also for a genuine interest in their careers that continued into their retirement.

Somborne Park, which his father handed over to him in 1961, had been inherited from the Wells family. Catholic Recusants and Jacobites, but was rebuilt in the late 18th century with a frontage of unusually tall sash windows, a fine Regency hall and a sweeping staircase. Acquired by the Hervey-Bathursts early in the 19th century, they used it as a shooting box and did not live there until the 1960s after being forced to leave their family seat, Clarendon Park near Salisbury. The estate, once more than 20,000 acres, had been reduced to a mere 200 when he took over, while the house had fallen into such decay that the sky could be glimpsed through the ceiling of the main drawing room, with the park, gardens and woodland forming an overgrown wilderness.

Undeterred, the new owner travelled down every weekend, spending all his time on a tractor or with a billhook or scythe when not busy with painting, plumbing or joinery. Starlight guests were press-ganged into driving tractors or fastening chains round recalcitrant tree stumps. They were partially mollified by picnics in the woods (regardless of rain or mud), but their host seldom trusted them to work there, telling trees by himself with a chain saw or an axe, pollarding and coppicing, and preserving young saplings from the ravages of deer. In the end most of the 200 acres became a model nature reserve into which a colony of badgers was successfully introduced. Hervey-Bathurst warmly encouraged the restoration of the enchanting little Anglo-Saxon church at the bottom of the park, arranging concerts of West Gallery music — the sacred music sung to folk tunes in English country churches during the 18th century.

By 1989 Somborne Park had recovered its beauty inside and out, lovelier than at any time in its history. A new hall was decorated in the Gothic style while the red brick of the Edwardian wing was mellowed by lime-wash. The interior was enhanced by the paintings of Lady Hervey-Bathurst, whose landscapes in oils and watercolours have a haunting, pastoral quality. Shortly after retiring from Lazard Hervey-Bathurst developed cancer of the mouth that prevented him from eating solids, besides destroying his immune system. The cancer came back more than once and he could no longer drive a tractor. Bearing his malady with extraordinary stoicism, he taught himself to cook, entertaining guests with wonderful meals worthy of a good French restaurant that he himself was never able to taste. Understandably, he would occasionally growl, “Eat it up, damn you!”

In 1957 he married Caroline, only daughter of Sir William Stackey, Bt, of Norwood Park, Nottinghamshire, a partnership that brought him great happiness together with a son and two daughters. The heir to the baronetcy is their son, Sir Frederic.

Sue Carroll

Journalist and long-running Daily Mirror columnist who wrote about society’s shortcomings with energy, candour and humour

Sue Carroll was a Fleet Street journalist who for more than a decade wrote one of the Daily Mirror’s most popular, and often provocatively, weekly columns. Hard-working and driven, she tackled, with always a typical frankness, an ever-growing range of issues from providing dignity for the elderly to the rights of smokers and gay people. She was never self-pitying — and her admirers felt that she was a “chocolate soldier” who always “talked from the heart” and gave a voice to the voiceless — and engaging with celebrities from Elton John to Bob Geldof made a deep impression with the paper’s readers and the Mirror called her “heart and soul.” She also became a regular contributor to a number of television shows, appearing as a regular pundit on The Alan Titchmarsh Show.

In 2002 in a privacy case at the High Court, the model Naomi Campbell claimed that Carroll’s description of her as a “chocolate soldier” was deliberately racist. Carroll denied this but the judge awarded Campbell aggravated damages.

Last year Carroll was given a diagnosis of pancreatic cancer, from which her father had also suffered. In March this year she used her column to discuss her illness, her feelings on finding out about it — which were typically not self-pitying — and her admiration for those helping her. “I suspect we all harbour fears of how we might react to being told that, in life’s great lottery, we have got the disease neither money nor the best brains in medical science can guarantee to permanently eradicate,” she wrote. “I always imagined I’d rant and scream. ‘Why me?’ Instead, I froze and stared at the floor as my doctor revealed the results of a CT scan. There were no ifs, buts or arguments — this technology is cruelly accurate.”

She was determined to continue working and, despite a stroke, appeared in a wheelchair at the Mirror’s annual Pride of Britain awards in October last year. Carroll was respected by colleagues and rivals alike for her down-to-earth nature, warmth, laughter and feisty character.

Sue Carroll, journalist, was born on December 6, 1953. She died of cancer on December 25, 2011, aged 58.