

# Lady Frederica Rozelle Ridgway Pierrepont 1925-2015

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Whilst browsing through the online newspaper archives, I was suddenly drawn to a short article written by the illustrious 'Mr Dover' Terry Sutton who sadly is no longer with us.

## Terry's Talk, Friday 13th September 1991 by Terry Sutton.

Yachtswoman Rozelle Raynes, who has a house on the cliffs at St. Margarets, has written another book. The latest, *The Tuesday Boys*, tells of an exciting experiment of taking children in local authority care on trips in her yacht; Rozelle used to be Lady Rozelle Beattie when she lived at South Sands House in the Bay. She used to work as a purser on one of Jack Dawson's Townsend ferries.

A Lady working as a purser on the ferries? Wow! How intriguing! I must find out more about this fascinating lady.

Here is the incredible story of the Lady who lived in our midst. Lady Frederica Rozelle Ridgway Pierrepont was born on the 17th November 1925 to Gervas Evelyn Pierrepont M.C. 1881-1955 and his wife Marie-Louise Roosevelt Butterfield 1889-1984. The couple had married in 1918.

Gervas, the eldest son of Evelyn Henry Pierrepont the brother of the 4th Earl Manvers, was educated at Winchester and Coopers Hill. He served in the First World War with the rank of Captain and was awarded the Military Cross, the Order of the Crown of Belgium and the Croix de Guerre.

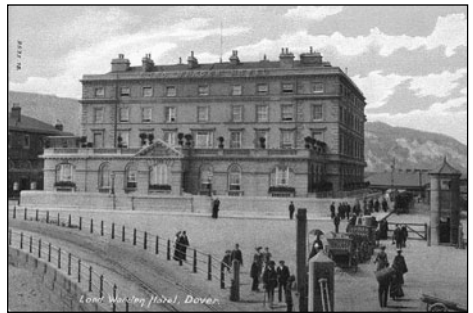
After the war Gervas served as a Justice of the Peace for the county of London and he became a County Councillor for Brixton, from 1922 to 1946.

Marie-Louise Roosevelt Butterfield, the only child of Sir Frederick Roosevelt Butterfield of Cliffe Castle Keighly, and his wife, Lady Jessie Kennedy Ridgway, was related to Theodore Roosevelt the U.S. President through her maternal grandmother. She was an extremely accomplished artist and exhibited a passion for art from an early age.

When Frederica was born in 1925 to Gervas and Marie-Louise she was their third and youngest child. Their first-born Mary Helen arrived in 1920, followed by a son Evelyn Louis in 1924. Tragedy struck the family when Evelyn aged four died of



*Banquet at The Lord Warden Hotel*



*Lord Warden Hotel, Dover*

scarlet fever in 1928 and only eighteen months later nine-year-old Mary died of septicaemia following an operation on her adenoids.

In 1940 Gervas Pierrepont succeeded his cousin Evelyn Robert and became the 6th Earl Manvers. The family moved into the splendid family seat of Thoresby Hall in Nottinghamshire, a massive sprawling Victorian mansion and estate. Young Rozelle (Frederica) as she was now familiarly called was fourteen years old. She felt stifled by her parent's love and was desperate to escape the high society lifestyle she was born into. War was raging and soon the estate was requisitioned by the army and became a training ground for British Army tanks and troop accommodation. Rozelle wanted to do her bit for her country, and finally when she was seventeen years old, her parents reluctantly allowed her to join the W.R.N.S. as a stoker, training at Portsmouth.

Although Rozelle deplored the war it was giving her a taste of the freedom she longed for. She was determined not to live the life of a debutante. Wren Stoker Pierrepont 65152 fell in love with the sea, the hard physical manual work of scrubbing decks and greasing engines. When she first took the tiller on a boat, she experienced a life changing moment; she adored the cold, the sea air, the freedom and excitement. She danced with sailors who affectionately called her Blondie, drank rum, and made friends as freely as any ordinary girl. She was adamant she wasn't going to return to her old life as an Earl's daughter.

Rozelle's job entailed crewing naval cutters which operated in Southampton Water and the Solent. In the weeks leading up to D-day she was employed in delivering men and supplies to the invasion fleet which

was growing daily. On D-Day itself, 5th June 1944, she witnessed the great armada on the move to France when her crew was sent down to Southampton Water in their tug, to bring back three personnel landing crafts which had broken down near the Needles. At last, the great day had arrived, and the hundreds of craft were moving southwards towards Normandy and a fate unknown. There were ships of all types and sizes; armed merchant cruisers, destroyers, minesweepers, corvettes, trawlers, ocean tugs, infantry landing craft, tank landing craft...no one knew if they would return. Days later she saw the devastating cost of war when the wounded troops were brought back home across the Channel.

When the war ended, with her stoker's badge to her credit, having been one of the first women to go on a stoker's course, Rozelle was demobbed. She burst into tears at the thought of returning to her previous life but was determined not to live the life of a privileged debutante, enjoying lobster, pheasant and champagne dinners.

Rozelle remained on the water on a freelance basis, at first joining the crew of a 100-ton Bermudan cutter as a deck hand. On her 21st birthday her mother bought her an old former lifeboat, a bit dilapidated but she none-the-less cruised the coasts of France, Belgium and the Netherlands, sometimes single-handedly.

In 1947 she joined the crew of the racing yacht Moonbeam.

In 1953 when Rozelle was twenty-eight years old, she married ex-Coldstream Guards Major Alexander Montgomerie Greaves Beattie, a former bodyguard of Winston Churchill. They bought Clarence Hatry's house *The Hermitage* at St. Margarets Bay in Dover, which they later

renamed *South Sands House*. In 1955 Rozelle inherited the Pierrepont estates when her father the 6th Earl Manvers died. The earldom title then became extinct as there were no male heirs.

Rozelle bought a 25-foot Folkboat the *Martha McGilda* in 1956 in which she sailed single handedly across the Baltic Sea to Russia, a 1200-mile trip. She was an extremely accomplished sailor having earned a Merchant Navy Lifeboatman's Certificate and a Yacht Master's Offshore Certificate. In 1961 Major Alexander Beattie and Rozelle divorced, they had no children.

In 1963 Rozelle had a luxurious new home built, high on the cliffs between St. Margarets and Dover. In the grounds stood the old South Foreland lighthouse, a landmark in itself for Channel shipping. She named the house Dolphin's Leap.

A few years later whilst working on the Townsend Ferries *Halladale* and *Free Enterprise* as an assistant purser, with Jack Dawson as her Captain, Rozelle met her husband to-be Dr. Richard Hollings Raynes. They married quietly in 1965, in the Registry Office in Dover, on Castle Street. The happy couple enjoyed many sailing voyages together, notably a three-month exploration of the Norwegian Coast. By now Rozelle and her husband Richard were splitting their time between St. Margarets and London, with the Manvers' estates being largely managed by the estate trustees.

The couple organised a scheme taking disadvantaged boys sailing on the Thames regularly. The boys aged only nine to thirteen came from horrific backgrounds. Teaching them the basics of sailing, safety, and navigation to give them a new outlook on life and improve their chances of a

better future was the aim. The scheme was regarded as a success and lasted for thirty years. Rozelle was complimented for the endless time and energy she had given to this remarkable enterprise.

Rozelle was concerned with helping to improve the welfare and happiness of people, and to help alleviate their suffering. Another one of her schemes was when she helped to rehouse twenty-seven Yugoslavian refugees, who had been displaced by the violence in their country. She helped to arrange the transport for them to the UK and found them accommodation in Nottingham.

Under the name Rozelle Raynes she wrote and published many books. The first book she wrote in 1968 was an account of her three-month exploration of the Norwegian Coast in her Folkboat and was called *North in a Nutshell*. Her memoir, *Maid Matelot* was published in 1971 and described her adventures in World War Two as a stoker. *The Tuesday Boys* was published in 1991 recounting her bold scheme to teach boys living in long-term care in the East End of London how to sail. *Memoirs of a Turkish Bear, Limehouse Lil, The Seabird, A Boat Called Martha*, and *27 Kisses followed*.

Lady Rozelle Raynes (nee Pierrepont) died peacefully in her sleep on Monday 22nd June 2015, at Thoresby, aged eight-nine years. Loving and loved wife of Dick Raynes, daughter of Gervas, 6th Earl Manvers.

Extraordinary Woman, Author and Mariner.