

PAGET, GEORGE CHARLES HENRY VICTOR 7th Marquess of Anglesey (1922-2013), soldier, historian, conservationist

Name: George Charles Henry Victor Paget
Date of birth: 1922
Date of death: 2013
Spouse: Elizabeth Shirley Vaughan Paget (née Morgan)
Child: Amelia Myfanwy Polly Paget
Child: Elizabeth Sophia Rhiannon Paget
Child: Henrietta Charlotte Eiluned Paget
Child: Rupert Edward Llewellyn Paget
Child: Charles Alexander Vaughan Paget
Parent: Victoria Marjorie Harriet Paget (née Manners)
Parent: Charles Henry Alexander Paget
Gender: Male
Occupation: soldier, historian, conservationist
Area of activity: History and Culture; Military; Nature and Agriculture
Author: Keith Robbins

Henry Anglesey was born in London on 8 October 1922, the only son of Charles Henry Alexander Paget, 6th Marquess of Anglesey (1885-1947), soldier and courtier, and his wife Lady Victoria Marjorie Harriet (née Manners, 1883-1946). He had five sisters: Lady Alexandra Mary Cecilia Caroline (1913-1973), Lady Elizabeth Hester Mary (1916-1980), Lady Mary Patricia Beatrice Rose (1918-1996), Lady Rose Mary Primrose (1919-2005), Lady Katharine Mary Veronica (born 1922). The family seat was at Plas Newydd in Anglesey. He was educated at Wixenford School and Eton College. He married Elizabeth Shirley Vaughan Morgan (born 1924) on 16 October 1948, and they had two sons, Charles Alexander Vaughan, 8th Marquess (born 1950) and Lord Rupert Edward Llewellyn (born 1957), and three daughters, Lady Henrietta Charlotte Eiluned (born 1949), Lady Elizabeth Sophia Rhiannon (born 1954) and Lady Amelia Myfanwy Polly (born 1963).

Deeply conscious of his family's military heritage, the Second World War saw a young man on active service as a major in the Royal Horse Guards (The Blues) in Italy. In the cold climate of 1947, on the death of his father, Henry Anglesey (previously known under his courtesy title as Earl of Uxbridge) had quickly to turn to financial problems. Death duties of £2.5 million were due on an estate valued at £3.5 million and could only be met by selling off a very large acreage and disposing of property in London and Staffordshire. Eventually, in 1976, Plas Newydd itself, together with 169 acres of surrounding estate, he gave to the National Trust. However, the family retained some private areas and he continued to live there. What pleased the marquess was his continuing use of his study, for it was in that room that his unexpected second career took shape.

He was not a university graduate and had no formal historical training. However, as his books appeared, he gained a substantial reputation as a military historian. In due course, he was elected to Fellowships of the Society of Antiquaries, the Royal Historical Society and the Royal Society of Literature. He began with an edition of *The Capel Letters, 1814-1817* (1955). His biography of his ancestor, *One Leg: The Life and Letters of the 1st Marquess of Anglesey* (1961), was an obvious personal entrée into the historical world, but his enthusiasm did not stop there. Further capable editions of letters and memoirs followed. He then began to settle down to what became his major oeuvre, *A History of the British Cavalry 1816-1919* which began appearing in 1973. It was then advertised as the first in a projected series of four volumes. In fact, when the last was published in 1995, it reached eight volumes. He devoted a quarter of a century to the enterprise, showing a stamina which few 'professional' historians can match. He described his work to this author as 'escapist stuff' but there is no denying the seriousness of his research and the depth of his knowledge. That he stuck to his task is testimony to his enthusiasm and commitment. He was Vice-President of the Society of Army Historical Research and a Member of the Council of the National Army Museum. He was Hon. President of the Crimea War Research Society. He was awarded an Honorary D.Litt by the University of Wales in 1984, and his contribution to military history brought him the Chesney Gold Medal of the Royal United Services Institute for Defence Studies in 1996.

He was not a familiar figure in the House of Lords and never spoke there, though he did vote once. He was prominent in various contexts in North Wales as a Deputy Lieutenant (1960) in Anglesey, Vice-Lieutenant there (1960-83) and Lord Lieutenant of Gwynedd (1983-89). He was heavily involved in the long-running Public Inquiry (1975-76) into the River Conwy crossing. His assiduous attendance and concern has often been seen as having 'saved' the town and its castle. He chaired the Historic Buildings Council for Wales (1977-92) and was the founding President of the Friends of Friendless Churches (1966-84). He served as a Vice-Chairman of the Welsh National Trust (1975-85) and was a President of the National Museum

of Wales (1962-68). He was a member of the Royal Fine Art Commission (1965-71) and a Trustee both of the National Portrait Gallery (1979-91) and of the National Heritage Memorial Fund (1980-92). He combined a seriousness of judgment with a somewhat zany sense of humour.

Lady Anglesey, his wife, made her own equally significant contribution to public life. The first Women's Institute had been formed at Llanfair PG in 1915 and this coincidence led to her initial local interest in its work, but then to a wider involvement and the office of chair of the National Federation of Women's Institutes (1966-69). She published *The Countrywoman's Year* in 1960. At its inauguration in 1964 she served on the Civic Trust for Wales. The daughter of two novelists, Hilda Vaughan (1892-1985) and [Charles Langbridge Morgan](#) (1894-1958), her wide literary and cultural interests were put to the service of the Welsh Arts Council as its chair (1975-81). Her role in Wales led to an honorary degree from the University of Wales (LL.D, 1977) ahead of her husband. She also served on the Council of the university in Bangor. Beyond Wales she chaired the Broadcasting Complaints Commission (1987-91). She also served on the drama and dance advisory committee of the British Council. She was a vice-chair of the Museums and Galleries Commission and served on the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution (1973-79), keeping thereafter a keen interest in environmental matters. She was appointed CBE in 1977 and advanced DBE in 1983.

The combination of their overlapping but also diverse interests meant that, over decades, 'the Angleseys' together made a distinctive contribution to public life in Wales and beyond. Neither was content to rest idly on whatever social or literary advantage heredity had given them but developed their own talents, sometimes unexpected ones, to their own and public benefit.

Henry Anglesey died of multiple organ failure at Plas Newydd, Anglesey, his place of residence, on 13 July 2013. He was cremated in a private ceremony. A memorial service was held for him at Bangor Cathedral on 14 June 2014.

Author

Keith Robbins

Sources

Personal Knowledge

The Daily Telegraph, obituary 15 July 2013

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Further Reading

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