



OFFICIAL REPORT

OF THE

MIDSUMMER MEETING

OF CHIEF PLEAS

OF THE

ISLAND OF SARK

HANSARD

Assembly Room, Sark, Wednesday, 6th July 2016

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Present:

Seigneur

Maj. C M Beaumont Esq

President of Chief Pleas

Lt Col. R J Guille MBE

Deputy Prévôt

Mrs J Godwin

Greffier

Mr T J Hamon

Treasurer

Mrs W Kiernan FCA

Constable

Mr P S La Trobe-Bateman

Vingtenier

Mr G Williams

Conseillers:

Sandra Williams
Hazel Fry
Karen Adams
Richard Dewe
Elizabeth Dewe
Antony Dunks
Paul Williams
Rosanne Byrne
Christine Audrain
Robert Cottle
Diane Baker
Edric Baker

Paul Burgess
Peter Byrne
Elsie Courtney
Colin Golds
Charles Maitland
Nicolas Moloney
Elizabeth Norwich
Roger Norwich
Helen Plummer
William Raymond
Arthur Rolfe
Stephen Taylor
Christopher Nightingale
Anthony Ventress

Business transacted

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Midsummer Meeting of Chief Pleas

Chief Pleas met at 10.00 a.m.

[THE PRESIDENT *in the Chair*]

PRAYER

The Greffier

ROLL CALL

The Greffier

The Greffier: There are 26 Conseillers, the Seigneur and the President of Chief Pleas present.

5 **The President:** I present apologies from Conseiller Blythe.

Business of the Day

1. Welcome to the new Seigneur, Maj. Christopher Michael Beaumont

The President: I would like to welcome the new Seigneur, Maj. Christopher Beaumont, who becomes the 23rd Seigneur of Sark, to this, his first meeting.

10 The process of succession is quite brutal as no heir can assume the title without the death of a family member; in most cases, a father, as we have with this succession.

Seigneur, I hope that you have a long and full life as Seigneur of this Island and we look forward to you and your wife, Sarah, moving here to live amongst us and with us for many years to come.

15 **The Seigneur:** Thank you, Reg, very much for those kind words and thank you, Conseillers, for your condolences as well.

Today is a little surreal. I was expecting to be seated behind you and not in front of you. However, I have already booked passage to be here next week and I will be here, as for every meeting in the future. I am not going to say anything more at this stage; I will leave that until

20 next week, if I may.

Thank you.

**2. Eulogies for the late Seigneur,
John Michael Beaumont Esq OBE**

The President: Eulogies for the late Seigneur.

I will make a eulogy and tribute, and I will be followed by Conseiller Edric Baker.

25 Michael Beaumont, the late Seigneur of this Island, died suddenly on the morning of 3rd July. The news of his death came as a shock to us all and especially to Diana and his family. To many of us used to seeing him on a regular basis, often wheeling Diana around the roads of Sark, it seemed that he would be with us for many more years; but as we now know that was not to be.

30 Michael inherited the fief on the death of his grandmother on 14th July 1974, becoming the 22nd Seigneur of the Island, ruling for almost 42 years. He, with Diana, moved to Sark in 1975 to take up residence at the Seigneurie.

Michael first sat in Chief Pleas as Seigneur at the Michaelmas Meeting of 1974 and, with only occasional absences, in the intervening 42 years.

35 In those early days the Seigneur was much more involved politically and always chaired the most senior committee of Chief Pleas and served on several others such as the DCC. This situation lasted until the early years of this Millennium when he stood down from all committees over a period of time.

40 When he appointed me as the Seneschal in the year 2000, I also had a political role, in that the Seigneur also sat on the senior committee as *ex officio*. So for a few years we worked together for the good and benefit of the Island on that committee.

At much the same time as the Seigneur gave up those political roles, so did I and the Deputy Seneschal, who at the time was also a Deputy of the People, and we took the decision that the Deputy Seneschal would resign as a Deputy. This was well before the Reform Law changes came about in 2009 after the enactment of the 2008 Reform Law.

45 In the run up to the new Reform Law, which started in the year 2000 with the formation of a Constitutional Review Committee, Michael had supported from the onset that Chief Pleas should move towards a fully democratic system of government, albeit that he was prepared to go to a halfway house if that was what the electorate and Chief Pleas desired, and which was the initial consideration in the 2005 Constitutional Law.

50 However, when that was challenged and not supported by the UK Ministry responsible to Her Majesty for Sark affairs, he then fully supported the move to a fully democratic parliament and put his influence to bear to help achieve that aim. This was the eventual outcome of the Island opinion poll which received Royal Assent in the 2008 Reform Law.

55 Since 2008, the Seigneur adopted the role of a constitutional ruler, giving his advice when he felt it to be necessary and being available for consultation when requested by the body politic.

Michael was passionate about trying to preserve much of Sark's traditions and way of life, but always recognising that Sark must change if it was to succeed into the future.

60 We have much to be thankful to Michael for. Much of his work has been behind the scenes and not seen by the wider public, such as the gifting of land for Island use and being on constant call to speak with innumerable journalists and others who required to speak with the Seigneur of the last semi-feudal jurisdiction in Europe. He also represented Sark as its first citizen.

65 At all times, Michael behaved with great dignity, even in the face of great provocation. The Seigneur of this Island has few powers and, if the truth be known, had very few when Michael took over the role. Any powers that the Seigneur has are determined by this Assembly and changes are made after consultation with the Seigneur.

The Seigneur is also the Chairman of the Trustees of Island Properties and in that role Michael attended a site visit with surveyors at Clos du Manoir at 10 o'clock last Friday morning – the land he had gifted to the Island for local housing.

He will be missed for his wise counsel.

70 Conseiller Baker.

Conseiller Edric Baker: I first met the Seigneur, Michael Beaumont, in 1974, when he and his wife Diana came to Sark after Michael inherited the title along with the Seigneurie from his grandmother, Dame Sybil Hathaway.

75 They arrived in Sark to find the house, farm and buildings and, more importantly for them, the gardens in a very run down state. Diana and Michael were not fazed by this and over many years, and with a lot of hard physical work, they brought the gardens back to the wonderful asset and attraction that it is today.

80 My first direct experience of working with Michael was when he joined the Constables Committee to plan the Royal visit of 1978. Many meetings later, the special day arrived. Because of the weather, the dais that had been erected in the Seigneurie grounds had to be hastily transferred to the Island Hall. The Queen and Prince Philip were met at the Harbour by the Seigneur and taken by carriage to the hall where, in front of a full Island Hall the Seigneur swore allegiance to Her Majesty.

85 After a full period of engagements, the Royal couple were taken down to the Harbour and the awaiting Royal yacht. In spite of the weather, the day was a great success and the first of many Royal visits that Michael was involved with.

90 In Chief Pleas I had the privilege of serving on several committees with Michael, three of which he was elected chairman with the huge associated workload. We worked together on the General Purposes and Advisory Committee for many years, which became the lead committee of Chief Pleas, with its monthly meetings and meetings in Guernsey. We both worked on the Natural Amenities and Land Control Committee. Through Michael's hard work and dedication, it evolved into the Development Control Committee we have today. Michael was fair with his dealings with the applicants and any appeals process that followed.

95 Michael was also a conscientious member of the Douzaine and took responsibilities for many projects that emanated from that committee. As Seigneur, he was involved in the Law of alienation and in fact alienated several pieces of his own land for the benefit of the community.

100 The Seigneur also chaired the Medical Committee for many years, which had the responsibility of appointing the Island's doctor. It was essential that we had the right person for that position.

Michael held these committee positions right up to the constitutional changes and was, from the very beginning, in favour of a fully-elected Assembly, Option A.

Michael Beaumont was a gentleman – kind, generous and, above all, fair – a man of principle, a Seigneur totally committed to the Island home and the people of Sark.

105

The President: Thank you.

Before I ask you to stand for a silence, is there any other Conseiller who would wish to speak?
Conseiller Sandra Williams.

110 **Conseiller Sandra Williams:** I have had the pleasure of knowing Mr Beaumont for the last 40 years. I was a young child when the family moved here, but I remember with fond memories seeing him and Diana working in the gardens, chatting to the visitors and being his normal, gentlemanly self.

115 Mr Beaumont was a very kind man, very generous – although many would not know how generous he was. In the last 10 years I have become more involved with Mr and Mrs Beaumont and I know I will miss seeing him every day pushing Mrs Beaumont out in her wheelchair.

I last spoke to him on Saturday and he was very chipper. He will be sadly missed by many people on Sark.

Rest in peace, sir, and enjoy the respect and peace that you deserve.

120

Members: Hear, hear.

The President: Please stand.

Members stood in silence.

125 **The President:** Thank you.
Conseiller Maitland.

Conseiller Maitland: Sir, I propose that the Midsummer Meeting be now adjourned to the same time and place on Wednesday, 13th July 2016, to conduct the business of the Agenda.

130 **The President:** Thank you.
Those in favour; those against. **Carried.**
Greffier, please.

PRAYER
The Greffier

Chief Pleas closed at 10.15 a.m.