

“Leeds Castle was my private playground”

THE MAN WHO GREW UP AT KENT’S TOURIST ATTRACTION



Anthony Russell had a childhood quite unlike any other. For during the summer months he would find himself having Leeds Castle as his private playground.

In the days before it became a tourist attraction, it was owned by Lady Baillie, an Anglo-American heiress who had the castle as her home – opening it up for star-studded parties and providing the most glorious place for a child to enjoy.

Recounting those days of his youth, Anthony Russell has penned his memoir – *Outrageous Fortune: Growing Up At Leeds Castle*. It has already generated interest around the world, and **MMM** was fortunate enough to catch up with him when publisher, Rasa Dregva, met him on a visit back to his former home.

He explained: “Growing up with Leeds Castle as my second home, the other being my parents well-staffed five-story house on Egerton Terrace, in Knightsbridge, London, had the less than desirable effect of effortlessly rendering me more spoiled than a Buckingham Palace corgi before I understood the meaning of the word.”

His grandmother had purchased Leeds Castle in 1926. The castle was her lifelong love, and, with great vision and considerable generosity she ensured that after her death the castle, managed by the Leeds Castle Foundation, would be enjoyed by visitors from all over the world.

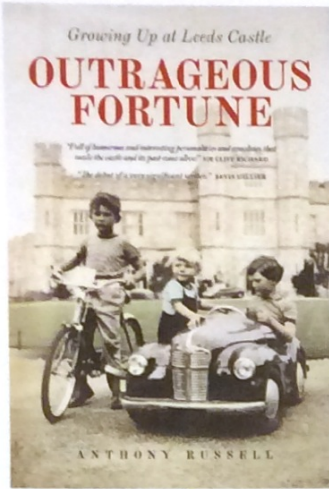
To Anthony, his grandmother was simply known as Granny B. His earliest memories of her were recalled with a smile - he was in a pram outside Harrods in London with her.

MMM: What are your earliest memories of the castle as a child?

AR: I remember going for walks in the grounds of the castle. I remember looking up at it and thinking, this is awesome, although I would never of said that actual word out loud!

MMM: Where were you educated and how do you feel castle life influenced you during those years?

AR: Up until the age of five, I spent half of my life at Leeds Castle and the rest in London, where I was to attend school. It was not long after starting school, that I realised that not everyone actually lived in a castle.



However, as a child growing up, I felt no need to shout about it. In fact, I learnt early on that there was a delicate balance to maintain between school friends and my home life. It would take quite a while for me to introduce friends to the castle.

MMM: What influence did your grandmother have on you growing up?

AR: I had a very formal upbringing. As children we had to be 'invited' down to do

things and visit certain parts of the castle, for example the drawing room, by the 'grown-ups'. In the grounds, we were free to play and explore, but inside the castle we had to conform to the 'castle way'. I am extremely proud of Granny B, she was firm, but kind and fair – in some ways, I like to think that I am like her now.

MMM: What inspired you to write your book and how long did it take?

AR: Stories of castle life regularly 'popped' into my head and so I started jotting them down. The book came about by accident. The stories I had noted, fell into the right hands and were encouraged by publishers and so the journey to writing a full-blown book started. The ideas stage took a few months. I had never written a book before, but I had great publishers to guide me along. In total, the book took three to four years to write.

MMM: And the outcome?

AR: I have had some fantastic reviews and feedback including reviews in the New York Times and comments from Sir Cliff Richard.

I am thrilled with the outcome.

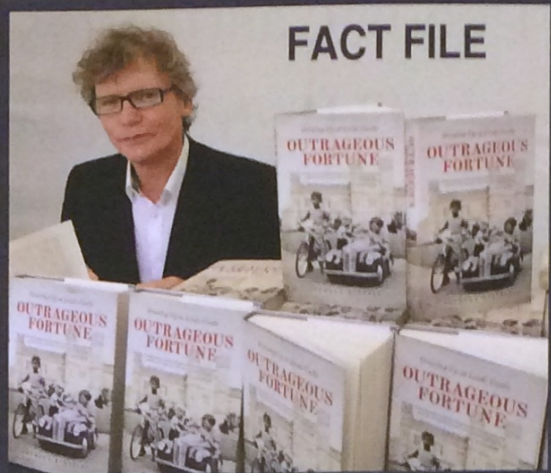
The book is available to purchase from Leeds Castle or from www.anthony-russell.com



Rasa Dregva, **MMM** Magazine Publisher meets Anthony Russell



FACT FILE



Famous Relatives
 Anthony Russell, Grandson of Lady Baillie.
 Nephew of Sir Gawaine Baillie. Motor racing driver, engineer, industrialist, stamp collector.

Music Career
 Musician who plays guitar and sings.
 Gigged in the 1970's in London.
 Signed to Atlantic Records for a short period.
 Released music CD in 2003 in memory of his mother.



Anthony Russell with his wife Catherine