



WHEELS-ALIVE!

www.wheels-alive.co.uk

Lord Montagu opens the Circus Room at Beaulieu in tribute to his mother

Published: April 1, 2026

Author:

Online version: <https://www.wheels-alive.co.uk/lord-montagu-opens-the-circus-room-at-beaulieu-in-tribute-to-his-mother/>



WHEELS-ALIVE!

www.wheels-alive.co.uk



Beaulieu tells us...

(All words and photographs from Beaulieu).

Lord Montagu is unveiling the Circus Room for Easter visits to [Beaulieu](#) in tribute to his mother after recently opening a new set of themed rooms in [Palace House](#).

The transformation has turned the Master Bedroom in the former private wing into a ringmaster's showground, complete with a 'big top' canopy and carousel horse. Lord Montagu chose the theme as the circus appears in so much of his mother's artwork, which now hangs in the room.

He explains: "The original idea came from a very fruitful collaboration with Southampton



Solent University, and the project work of student Hannah Edmunds. One of the unexpected outcomes of working with the interior design department was that I gained the confidence to make a lot of the decorative decisions myself, assisted by my project manager Jane Yapp.”

A tour of the room starts with a striking self-portrait by his mother, then Belinda Crossley, as a ringmaster in a top hat. Above the main fireplace is a painting of ‘Lord’ George Sanger’s Circus which she had visited with her sketchbook, drawing clowns, acrobats and performing horses. Both date from her days at the Byam Shaw art school in the late 1940s.



WHEELS-ALIVE!

www.wheels-alive.co.uk





Taking centre stage is a golden four-poster bed with a red-and-white-striped canopy surmounted by a crown at its apex. Under the 'big top', the upholstered bedhead is emblazoned with a comic heraldic lion and unicorn holding a conch shell filled with flowers. The design is the work of Lord Montagu, adapted from an old drawing by his mother. In an intricately embroidered folding screen next to the bed, Belinda, Lady Montagu has depicted a circus horse, clowns, juggler and yellow caravan - a reference to the gypsy caravan which her son adopted whilst at Walhampton School.



Beaulieu Jazz Festival carousel horse



WHEELS-ALIVE!

www.wheels-alive.co.uk





The adjoining turret, lined with a blue-and-white-striped fabric, commemorates the Beaulieu Jazz Festivals which took place on the front lawn of Palace House between 1956 and 1961. An old merry-go-round was used as the stage and the sole surviving carousel horse now takes pride of place in the room. The galloper named Rama has been immaculately restored by local signwriter Phil Gofton, who has finished him in fairground style colours with flourishes in gold leaf.

Lord Montagu reflects: “My mother loved horses, as well as showground culture, so this is a particularly appropriate place to put Rama.”

A large hanging designed by Lord Montagu lists the names of all those who performed at Beaulieu including big band leader Ted Heath, Humphrey Lyttleton, Acker Bilk, Johnny Dankworth, Cleo Laine and many other great British and international jazz artists and bands of the era. In the background, visitors will hear the sound of two Beaulieu-themed LPs released by bands which performed at the festival. Both contained tracks specially written for the festival, such as Ted Heath’s Vintage Veterans and Vic Lewis’s Beaulieu Blues.





But the turret isn't just a display space, it is also where house guests will be able to take a bath, using a large red tub mounted on a podium. Alongside it, an old washstand features a specially created splashback decorated with the carousel's Beaulieu Jazz Festival motif from the festival stage. Lighting the room is a specially made chandelier, based on a sketch by Lady Belinda and crafted by metal sculptor Gary Boulton, who lives on the estate, with glass beads decoration by Jane Yapp.

This slideshow requires JavaScript.

Harlequin Room

The original en-suite bathroom is now the Harlequin Room in which the lozenge patterned wallpaper blends the circus theme with the Montagu coat of arms. A series of framed illustrations which hang in the room are taken from a book by Lady Belinda called Little Alexander and the Dragon. Sadly, she never finished illustrating the story but one of these drawings is now the room's main feature, being reproduced on the wall tiles of the shower recess.

Reflecting on what he has created for public viewing and the occasional house guest, Lord Montagu said:

"I've already honoured my father's legacy in the Motor Room, and now I'm pleased to do the same for my mother who died in 2022. She loved the circus and produced so many wonderful paintings and embroideries drawing on it for inspiration, so this has become my tribute to her."



WHEELS-ALIVE!

www.wheels-alive.co.uk





Easter visits

See the Circus Room as part of your Easter visit to Beaulieu.

[Easter at Beaulieu](#), from March 28 - April 12, also includes a first chance to experience the [National Motor Museum's](#) brand new gallery [Driven: Britain's Motoring Story](#), follow the Top Trumps trail, ride in [Chitty Chitty Bang Bang](#) and see [Disney and Pixar Cars](#).

Have fun in adventure playground [Little Beaulieu](#), get into cars in [We Had One Of Those](#) and step back in time at [Beaulieu Abbey](#) and the [Secret Army Exhibition](#). Take unlimited rides on the tree-top monorail and tour the beautiful grounds and gardens. For tickets and details see www.beaulieu.co.uk or call 01590 612345.



WHEELS-ALIVE!

www.wheels-alive.co.uk

