

## **From the Daily Telegraph**

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### **Bill Shand Kydd - obituary**

**Bill Shand Kydd was a businessman and daredevil sportsman who played a cameo role in the Lord Lucan murder mystery**



Bill Shand Kydd in 1975 Photo: Topham Picturepoint

Bill Shand Kydd, who has died aged 77, was a businessman, daredevil sportsman, racehorse breeder and trainer, a one-time gambler and, by his own admission, a serial womaniser; he was also related, by marriage, to two of the most fascinating figures of the second half of the 20th century – Diana, Princess of Wales, and the Earl of Lucan, the peer who vanished after his children's nanny, Sandra Rivett, was found murdered in 1974.

Bill Shand Kydd's relationship to the princess was a distant one and he did not claim to know her well: his elder half-brother, Peter Shand Kydd, was married for 19 years to Diana's mother Frances after she left her first husband, Earl Spencer. He was much closer to Lord

Lucan (he was married to Christina, sister of Lucan's wife Veronica) and played a cameo role in the events before and after the Earl's sensational disappearance.

It was Christina Shand Kydd who first introduced Veronica to the then John Bingham. They married in 1963 and had three children, but the marriage broke down in the early 1970s and Lucan moved out of the family home at 46 Lower Belgrave Street to a property nearby. A bitter custody battle ensued, which Lucan lost. Christina spoke on her sister's side in the case, but she and her husband felt strongly that Lucan had been poorly served by the judgment, and subsequently the Shand Kydds provided a refuge for Lucan at their family seat, Horton Hall near Leighton Buzzard, during weekends when he was allowed access to his children.

In the hours following the murder of Sandra Rivett in the basement of 46 Lower Belgrave Street on the night of November 7 1974, Lucan drove a borrowed Ford Corsair 42 miles to the house of friends, Ian and Susan Maxwell-Scott, at Uckfield, East Sussex. There he wrote two letters to Bill Shand Kydd, who duly read them out at the inquest into Sandra Rivett's death in 1975.

In the first Lucan claimed that he had been walking past his old house when, peering into the basement window, he saw his wife struggling with a man. Letting himself in, he made his way down to the basement where he slipped in a pool of blood as he was rushing to his wife's assistance. The assailant had then run off, but Veronica became hysterical, accusing him of hiring someone to kill her before running from the house. "I will lie doggo for a while," Lucan wrote, "but I am only concerned about the children. If you can manage it I would like them to live with you." The second letter dealt with a planned auction of some of the family silver, and Lucan asked that the proceeds should be used to clear his bank overdrafts.

The Earl, Shand Kydd explained to the inquest, was "not one of my greatest friends, but I like him". He claimed that he had last seen Lucan two weeks before he disappeared, when the Earl had expressed concern that his children were not being properly cared for.

After his late-night visit to the Maxwell-Scotts, Lucan disappeared. The Corsair was later found abandoned in Newhaven, its interior stained with blood and its boot containing a piece of bandaged lead pipe. In 1975 the Earl was named by the inquest jury as Sandra Rivett's murderer.

In the aftermath of his disappearance, much was made of a lunch attended by Lucan's friends, including Shand Kydd, on November 8 1974, at the house of John Aspinall, owner of the Clermont Club in Mayfair, where Lucan had been a professional gambler. The tabloids suggested, without any evidence, that they were all privy to dark secrets about the Earl's whereabouts, whereas it seems that the focus of discussion was what they should do if Lucan reappeared. On November 12 Shand Kydd appeared on News at Ten to make a personal appeal for Lucan to come forward.

The arrogant behaviour of some of Lucan's former associates did little to quell the conspiracy theories. Aspinall, in particular, enjoyed goading the police and the media by camping up the "Clermont Set's" reputation for ruthlessness and snobbery. "If she'd been my wife, I'd have bashed her to death five years before and so would you," he told the police. But they were not all like Aspinall, least of all Shand Kydd, a thoughtful and charming man who once said: "Who needs a friend like Aspinall?"



Lord Lucan with his wife Veronica in 1963 (PHOTOSHOT)

Shand Kydd believed that Lucan probably took his own life shortly after his disappearance, but he never accepted that he was a murderer. While at the Maxwell-Scotts, Lucan had tried to telephone him, but Shand Kydd's bedside phone had been switched off. Shand Kydd felt that, had Lucan succeeded in getting through, he (Shand Kydd) might have been able to persuade him to face the music.

In the immediate years after the murder, the Lucan children, George Bingham and his two sisters, were brought up by their mother. By the time George was 14, however, she had had a mental breakdown and lost custody. The three children, from whom she was subsequently estranged, were eventually sent to live with Bill and Christina Shand Kydd, as had been Lucan's wish. It is thought that their time with the Shand Kydds, who had two children of their own, was a key factor in helping them overcome the traumas of their childhood. George Bingham once described Bill Shand Kydd as a "perfect role model", while Shand Kydd told a friend that he was tremendously proud that he had helped to pull Lucan's children through "unscathed". "For them to have got on with their lives totally unfazed and unbothered by any of this business is a credit to them," he said.

William Shand Kydd was born on May 12 1937, the son of the wallpaper magnate Norman Shand Kydd and his second wife, Freda. After education at Stowe, he did National Service in the Royal Horse Guards (the Blues), and In 1963 married Christina Duncan.

After leaving the Army Shand Kydd joined the family business but left after a few years and instead made a living developing property, farming his estate in Buckinghamshire and investing in start-up companies.

Meanwhile, he enjoyed the high life to the full. At St Moritz (where he met Lucan) he completed the Cresta Run. He also raced power boats with Lucan and became an amateur jockey (“Haven’t you found enough ways to break your neck?” asked his father when he acquired his first hunter). Rich, handsome and famously amusing, Shand Kydd once livened up the Whaddon Chase Hunt ball by streaking through the dancers. On another occasion he won, then promptly lost, £70,000 playing chemin de fer at the Clermont Club . He subsequently eschewed the gambling tables.

During his time as an amateur jockey Shand Kydd rode 45 winners under rules and more than 100 in point-to-points, mainly in the 1960s. He rode in the 1966 Grand National (unseated at the 25th fence), an event for which he claimed to have trained with “serious workouts in Annabel’s nightclub on a regular basis”. He rode Lord Lucan’s horse Le Merveilleux II at Sandown, and won the National Hunt Chase at Cheltenham on Foreman in 1973.

As a breeder, he produced High Board, the dam of Morley Street and Granville Again, and Brown Windsor, winner of the Whitbread Gold Cup in 1989.

He served as inaugural chairman of the Permit Trainers’ Association and as a steward at Towcester and Windsor, and was vice-chairman of the Amateur Jockeys’ Association. In 2004 he was elected an honorary member of the Jockey Club in recognition of his fundraising for racing charities.

Shand Kydd’s marriage to Christina did not deter him from having discreet relationships with other women, and he once claimed that he had been put off writing an autobiography by the thought of all the husbands who would be after him. As it was, he inspired an extraordinary devotion among his lovers, while his wife seems to have tolerated his peccadilloes.



Shand Kydd in later life after his riding accident (JIMMY GASTON)

Shand Kydd's life changed for ever, however, in September 1995 when the hunter he was riding faltered at a fence during a team chase at Sulgrave, Northampton, pitching him on his head. He broke two vertebrae, and was paralysed from the neck down.

This disaster brought out the best in Shand Kydd. He refused to succumb to self-pity and continued to pursue many of his interests with a touching vigour, inventing ingenious ways around his condition. He retained his engaging and flirtatious sense of humour and managed to maintain an atmosphere of jollity in the house which he and Christina shared with an army of helpers. "There's no such thing as privacy, but I keep my nurses laughing," Shand Kydd told an interviewer. "I've joked my way through my life and my memories are very sustaining."

After his accident Shand Kydd threw his formidable energies into raising hundreds of thousands of pounds for the charity Spinal Research, including taking part in a "tandem" 12,000ft skydive, complete with respirator, which raised almost £1 million. "I've always liked new challenges and doing things I'm told are impossible. That's been my philosophy all my life," he said.

Bill Shand Kydd is survived by his wife and by their son and daughter.

**Bill Shand Kydd, born May 12 1937, died December 27 2014**