

The Tennant Family

Sir Edward Priaulx Tennant (1859-1920) was created Lord Glenconner in 1911, and shortly after bought the Wilsford estate. When Joseph Lovibond the owner of Lake House died in 1918, the estate was purchased by Lord Glenconner and united it with that of Wilsford. He was Liberal MP for Salisbury from 1906-1910. His children were Clarissa 'Clare' Tennant (1896-1960); Edward Wyndham Tennant (1897-1916), war poet, killed in action in the First World War; David Pax Tennant (1902-1968) founder of the Gargoyle Club and wife of Hermione Baddeley; Stephen James Napier Tennant (1906-1987). His sister Margo Tennant became the wife of Prime Minister Herbert Asquith and their son was the well-known film director Anthony Asquith. His grandson Colin Tennant, 3rd Baron Glenconner (1927-2010) was the owner and developer of the island of Mustique in the West Indies. Colin Tennant's wife, Lady Glenconner was one of the Maids of Honour at Queen Elizabeth II's wedding.



Edward Tennant, circa 1900

Stephen Tennant was perhaps the most notorious member of the family, born at Wilsford cum Lake on 21 April 1906. During the 1920's and 1930's, Tennant was an important member of the "Bright Young People". He was said to have been a model for Cedric Hampton in Nancy Mitford's novel '*Love in a Cold Climate*' and for Sebastian Flyte in Evelyn Waugh's '*Brideshead Revisited*'. His friends included Rex Whistler, Cecil Beaton, the Sitwells, Lady Diana Manners and the Mitford girls. Also around this time he formed a sexual relationship with the war poet Siegfried Sassoon which was to last some four years until Tennant abruptly put an end to it. He entertained his friends at Wilsford Manor and it was here that one of the iconic photographs of the period was taken by Cecil Beaton. He suffered from tuberculosis shortly after his 21st birthday and convalesced along with Sassoon in the Mediterranean. Thereafter he led an indolent life redecorating Wilsford with exotic 'fishnets, pink satin and golden conch shells and worked for 40 years on his novel '*Lasca*'. He died his long hair mauve, wore make up and dressed in kaftans and bangles. He died at Wilsford in 1987 aged 80, outliving most of his contemporaries.



Stephen Tennant by Cecil Beaton