

# Larch Loyd

*Soldier and horse racing enthusiast who came into an unexpected inheritance*

LARCH LOYD, who has died aged 90, was a modernising landowner of his family's estate in Oxfordshire and a well-known figure in hunting and racing circles; during the Second World War he won an MC.

Christopher Lewis Loyd (always known as "Larch") was born at Lockinge, near Wantage, Oxfordshire, on June 1 1923 and educated at Eton and King's College, Cambridge, where he read Agriculture. Commissioned into the Coldstream Guards, he joined his unit in North Africa wearing shorts and a topee, which caused much merriment.

In October 1943 he was in Italy in command of a platoon of the 3rd Battalion which was holding a position facing the Germans on Monte Grande north of the river Volturno. On the night of October 15, while leading a reconnaissance patrol, he came under fire from four different Spandau posts. The next morning, with pressure on to break through the German position, he led his platoon in an attack on these positions, charging across open ground in the face of heavy fire from the enemy machine guns.

His small force suffered severe casualties and he was finally compelled to take cover some 30 yards from the Spandaus. He succeeded in holding this precarious position for two hours by sniping and throwing grenades until he was ordered by his company commander to withdraw.

He brought back the remains of his platoon by the most skilful use of the little cover available and was restrained from going forward again himself to recover his wounded only when directly forbidden to do so. He was awarded an Immediate MC.

After the war Loyd unexpectedly inherited the Lockinge Estate. He and his three sisters had already lost a brother in childhood through illness; his remaining, elder, brother then died of injuries sustained on active service; and his father died in 1944.

The estate, which included a significant art collection, had passed to the family through Harriet Loyd, the daughter of the 1st Lord Overstone, a banker and politician. Harriet married Robert Lindsay, 1st Lord Wantage, who won a VC in the Crimean War; she had no children.

Loyd qualified as a chartered surveyor in 1952. He pulled down the big house, which was unmanageable, and was



Loyd: won an Immediate MC

among the first to realise that traditional farm buildings would have a limited role in agriculture in the future. After a long battle with the planning authorities, he converted his redundant barns for business use.

A man of strong Christian faith, he was the epitome of a benevolent landlord and was much loved. He established a trust in the villages of Lockinge and Ardington to provide affordable housing long before the need for such initiatives became widely recognised.

Hunting and horse racing were twin passions. In 1945, Loyd joined the committee of the Old Berkshire Hunt and was appointed chairman in 1951. He steered the hunt through some turbulent times in the 1950s and retired from the committee in 1996, after 51 years' service.

Loyd established the Lockinge Stud on the estate. Notable winners were Coup, which won the Galtres Stakes at York and the Mornington Stakes at Ascot, and Gallic, which won the Errol Stakes at Ascot in the 1960s.

As a young man, Loyd had ridden at point-to-points and under National Hunt rules. He was a director of Newbury racecourse, and in 1952, with the help of its staff, he created at his own expense the point-to-point course at Lockinge. The Lockinge Stakes, a Group 1 Race first run at Newbury in 1958, continues to this day. Loyd was a trustee of the Wallace Collection between 1973 and 1990, High Sheriff of Berkshire in 1961, and served for many years as a JP.

Larch Loyd married (dissolved), in 1957, Joanna Smith-Bingham, who survives him with their two sons and one daughter.

Larch Loyd, born June 1 1923, died on July 14 2013

## Captain Christopher Loyd MC

Late Coldstream Guards  
by COLONEL D D S A VANDELEUR  
formerly Coldstream Guards

Larch (as he was known) Loyd, who died on 14th June 2013, was born on 1st June 1923 on the family estate in Oxfordshire, the youngest of six children. He had two elder brothers, one died in childhood and the other, John, was wounded at Tobruk whilst serving with the Coldstream, invalided home and died from his wounds in October 1943. By that time Larch had left Eton and Cambridge and joined the Coldstream and was serving in Italy with the 3rd Battalion, having been dissuaded by his father from joining the RAF.

John's death was a bitter blow for the Loyd family and this took its toll on his father's health, who was to die unexpectedly in 1944. Larch was the family's hope for the future, but he was commanding a platoon in the 3rd Battalion, at a time when life expectancy of infantry platoon commanders was not high. However, he distinguished himself, being awarded an immediate MC in October 1943. He was holding a position facing the Germans on Monte Grande north of the river Volturno. On the night of 15th October 1944, whilst leading a reconnaissance patrol, he came under fire from four different machine gun positions. The following morning, with pressure building to break through the German positions, he led his platoon in an attack, charging across open ground in the face of heavy fire from the German positions.

His platoon suffered heavy casualties and he was finally compelled to take cover some 30 yards from the machine guns. He held this position for two hours by sniping and throwing grenades until he was ordered by his company commander to withdraw. He brought back the remains of his platoon by most skilful use of the available cover and was restrained from going forward again himself to recover the wounded when directly forbidden to do so.

He returned in March 1945, was posted to the Training Battalion and released from military service in June 1946 in the honorary rank of captain. He joined the Wiltshire Yeomanry from 1950 to 1956, feeling the obligation to set an example to others in volunteering. This was typical of Larch, who had now to take on the leadership and management of the Lockinge estate. He knew that he had to tackle some major problems and, like all landowners at that time, faced some very considerable post-war challenges.

First there was the house, requiring fifty servants to keep it running at vast expense. He had it demolished, which was a difficult but visionary step, and moved into more modest accommodation. A new chapter opened in Larch's life - one of landowner, with the associated work of farming, forestry, and estate management. He also took on a vast array of civic responsibilities and gave generously of his time to all manner of charitable enterprises, including acting as President of the Oxford and Reading Branch of the Coldstream Guards Association. He was much admired and respected by the membership. He was a notable benefactor to the Regiment.

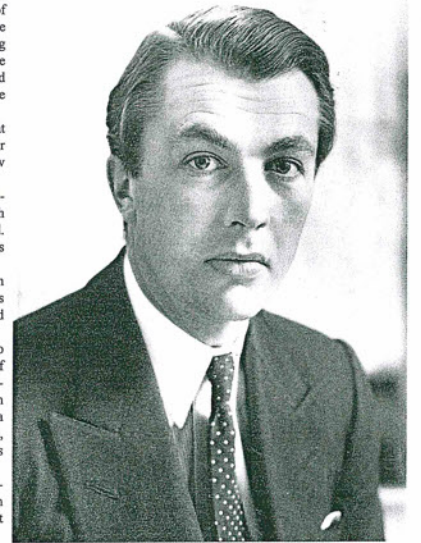
He met his future wife, Joanna Smith Bingham, at a racecourse and they were married on 17th December 1957. Three children were born at Lockinge and a new era of family life began.

Along with the estate, Larch had inherited an important art collection, started by Lord Wantage, which became a passion of his own and to which he added. When there was no further room on the walls of his house for paintings, he moved on to sculpture.

Larch pioneered the conversion of disused farm buildings for alternative purposes well ahead of his time, which has kept the villages of Ardington and Lockinge alive and thriving into the 21st century.

He handed over the running of the estate in 1985 to Thomas, enabling him to pursue his twin passions of hunting and racing. He was chairman of the Old Berkshire hunt from 1951 to 1996. He established his own stud and point-to-point course on the estate and was a director of Newbury racecourse. The Lockinge Stakes, a Group 1 race, first run at Newbury in 1958, continues to this day.

He also served for many years as a JP. He was a regular church-goer, with a strong Christian faith, which shaped his life. Larch is survived by Thomas, Harriet and James.



## The Wantage Herald

# Landowner tried to keep local people in business

By Pete Hughes  
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HE WAS in charge of a 7,500-acre estate, but "never acted the grand gentleman", and demolished his own home to save the estate.

Following his death, friends have paid tribute to Christopher Lewis Loyd, the head of Lockinge Estate. He died at home on July 14 aged 90, and his funeral was held at All Saints Church, Lockinge, last week.

Giving the eulogy on Thursday, Reverend Elizabeth Birch said: "His whole life had this place, this land, this community, this church as the hub from which everything else radiated out."

Christopher was born in Lockinge House on June 1, 1923 and grew up surrounded by a fleet of servants.

He had two older brothers, John and Martin, two older sisters, Anne and Hester, and a twin sister, Catherine.

Martin died in 1928 aged nine from polio. Christopher went to prep school at Stone House and then to Eton.

When the Second World War broke out in September 1939, he was 16. His brother John, heir to the Lockinge Estate, had joined the Coldstream Guards and was serving in Egypt, and Christopher followed suit.

While Christopher was still in training John was wounded and invalided

## Late war hero 'never the grand gentleman'

home. He died from complications from his wounds in October 1943.

While he was still away, Christopher's father died in November 1944.

Christopher did not speak often about his service, but he was awarded a Military Cross for protecting his men under enemy fire.

When he returned to England after the war, he had inherited the Lockinge Estate. At that time Lockinge House needed 50 servants to run and cost a small fortune.

There were also rumours of Government requisition at the time and Mr Loyd decided to demolish the house to save money.

The family moved to nearby Betterson House in 1947.

Mr Loyd now had the role of landowner, with the associated work of farming, forestry and estate management, while pursuing his lifelong passions for art, books, racing, dogs and horseriding.

He met his future wife Joanna Smith-Bingham at a racecourse and they were married at St Margaret's



'A very good landlord'... Christopher Lewis Loyd

Church, Westminster, on December 17, 1957. They had three children, Thomas born in 1959, Harriet in 1962 and James in 1968.

To ensure the survival of the estate, Mr Loyd pioneered the conversion of disused farm buildings for alternative purposes, welcoming business tenants in the 1970s and onwards.

Mr Loyd handed running of the estate to his son Thomas in 1985 but kept his hand in until late in his life.

The estate is now home to some 60 commercial units and 150 homes. Lockinge church organist Valerie Diamond said: "He didn't act the grand gentleman. He was just Christopher to everybody."

"He was a very good landlord. He tried to keep people in business in the village."

He is survived by his children and grandchildren Camilla, Sophie, Kit, Emily, Charlie, William and Eliza, and his sister Catherine.