

◁ The spectre of the spare wheel haunts the Royal Family in the shape of Princes Andrew and Harry. For a large part of his life, Andrew performed the number-two role impeccably. He was the dashing helicopter pilot who went on to represent British interests around the world. He had a purpose and he fulfilled it. But after his marriage to Fergie fizzled out and his naval career came to an end, he couldn't truly find a place. Then the Epstein scandal erupted, and now the question hangs in the air: what is the point of him? Was Prince Charles right to argue in favour of a slimmed-down Royal Family, with no extras who might heap embarrassment upon The Firm?

Consider, too, Prince Harry. Now William has three children, his role has been diminished – abandoned even, as he and Meghan take root in Canada, no longer using their royal titles and striving for 'financial independence'.

But wouldn't life be dull without these colourful second siblings? In *Brideshead Revisited* (whose author, Evelyn Waugh, was himself a mischievous second son), Sebastian Flyte was modelled on Hugh Lygon, the hard-drinking second son of the Earl of Beauchamp. He was a leading member of the Hypocrites' and Railway Clubs at Oxford, and a much more interesting character than his elder brother, the stolid and respectable Viscount Elmley, whose main claim to fame was as an MP for East Norfolk.

And sometimes the younger son can have it all. They can enjoy a youth of freedom and frivolity, then come into a fortune when they're older. Like Andrew Cavendish, second son of the 10th Duke of Devonshire, who was 30 when he became a duke and inherited Chatsworth and Lismore Castle. Some families, through years of artful marriages and careful nurturing, have accumulated so much wealth that there's enough to go round. The Duke of Rutland has his hands full running Belvoir Castle, so his younger brother, Lord Edward Manners, has taken over Haddon Hall, one of the most interesting houses of its period.

The second sons we love most are the ones who accept the junior role but make it a major success. The second fiddles who rise to become first-rate, such as the original Duke of Wellington, who was considered inferior to his elder brother, Lord Mornington, until he saved England at Waterloo.

In fact, the historic affliction of Second Son Syndrome appears to have been cured in the wider aristocracy: it appears it's actually better to be the second-born now (see the list of high-achievers on the right). You are free to pursue your passions and make your own success without the shackles of running a stately house or estate. Sadly, it seems the cure has yet to reach the Royal Family. □



Boris and Leo Johnson



Princess Nora of Oettingen-Spielberg and Lord Max Percy

Five seconds (who) rule

By GEOFF HEATH-TAYLOR

Leo Johnson

The steady one: The only Johnson without a Wikipedia page, Leo is the prime minister's younger brother, and second son of Stanley Johnson and his first wife, Charlotte Fawcett.

He may play second fiddle to Boris, but Leo has, like many second sons before him, forged his own path out of the spotlight. 'No one has tried harder than I have to keep a low profile,' he has said. 'But this extraordinary interest in my family persists. It's not that I mind being called Boris's brother, but I wouldn't want that to be known as my defining competence.'

Not that low a profile, mind: an entrepreneur and a partner at PricewaterhouseCoopers, Leo co-presents the Radio 4 programme *Futureproofing*. And while he has chosen to steer clear of Westminster, his Remain-advocating Twitter feed implies that he does have opinions and isn't afraid to make them known.

So what do family and friends say about him? Lara Johnson-Wheeler, daughter of Boris, says: 'My uncle Leo is an unwaveringly supportive human, who appreciates and is interested in all the nice, normal things life has to offer.' Steady and normal? Doesn't sound much like a Johnson.

The Hon Nicholas Howard

The one who wants everything: The saying goes that you cannot have your cake and eat it. But for Nick Howard, scion of that most ancient and noble family, it would seem that you can: this second son turned down his



The Hon Nicholas Howard and his son George Howard

inheritance in pursuit of fame and fortune, but later claimed it back. And what an inheritance it was – Nick's family home is none other than Castle Howard (of *Brideshead* fame), possibly the most beautiful stately home in England.

His father, Lord Howard, offered him the house and 10,000-acre estate, as Nick's older brother, Henry, was not able to take over the running of the estate for health reasons. But rather than accept his father's bequest, Nick pursued a career as a rock star, exhibiting the age-old character trait of a second son who wishes to be free from the shackles of family expectations. So brother number three, Simon, stepped up; for 30 years he managed Castle Howard as chief executive and chairman of the family company. Meanwhile, Nick's music career never took off and he ended up pursuing a career in photography.

Then in 2014, out of the blue, Nick served Simon and his wife with an eviction notice.



The Earl of Shaftesbury in the family seat, St Giles House

The Telegraph dubbed the saga ‘The Battle of Brideshead’. Nick and Simon – and their respective wives, Victoria (an ambitious former publishing boss) and Rebecca (an equally ambitious former socialite, once profiled by Plum Sykes as ‘the woman who set out to marry a house’) – took the dispute to court. Simon and Rebecca lost. A family friend at the time said: ‘This makes Cain and Abel look like a fairytale.’ Friends say that the brothers’ wives can’t stand each other, but Nick and Simon are – incredibly – still on speaking terms. Nick and Victoria live in Castle Howard, while Simon and Rebecca live a mere 10 miles away. Too close for comfort, some might say.

Lord Ted Innes-Ker

The competitor: Ted always wanted to be a professional golfer, but his parents, the late 10th Duke of Roxburghe and Lady Jane Grosvenor, urged him to get a degree first. So off he went from Floors Castle to Edinburgh University (by way of Eton). There, the dashing young Ted, with his sticky-out-ears and killer golf swing, was part of the Castle Crew – a group of students headed up by



Lord Ted and Celia Innes Ker

Pippa Middleton (she shared a flat with Ted for two years), who spent their weekends at castles and country houses.

Friends say Ted is softly spoken, shy and fiercely loyal to his beloved Scotland. He likes nothing more than being in the great outdoors, whether hunting, shooting, fishing or swinging clubs. While his brother, Charlie (now the 11th Duke of Roxburghe), went to Sandhurst and served in Iraq, Ted followed a very different path. After graduating, he became a pro golfer, then founded Reiver Travel, a Scottish travel firm for the super-rich. Capitalising on the contacts and skills that only a Scottish duke’s (second) son might have, Ted opens the doors to private estates for the world’s wealthiest adventurers.

And unlike Charlie, who married and divorced Charlotte Aiken in a year, 36-year-old Ted has been married to Celia Brook for two years. He’s currently first in line to inherit to the Dukedom of Roxburghe (which his brother inherited last year), but perhaps not for long. It seems Charlie is on the lookout for a duchess; rumour has it, he’s been spotted on Raya.

Lord Max Percy

The workaholic: Old Etonian Max is the hardworking, making-a-name-for-himself sort of second son. The youngest of the Duke and Duchess of Northumberland’s children, he grew up between the family estate of Alnwick Castle in Northumberland (aka Hogwarts in

the Harry Potter films) and their enormous London house, Syon Park.

While his brother, George, Earl Percy, is following his heart (setting up a geothermal exploration company), Max has taken the more conventional route of a career in high finance. His was an intern at Somerset Capital, the investment management company co-founded by Jacob Rees-Mogg, and now works as an investment analyst at a firm based in Cape Town. Friends describe 29-year-old Max as incredibly driven, focused and competitive, as opposed to his brother, who reportedly has a gentler temperament.

Although he was destined never to wear the ducal coronet, Max did marry a princess: Nora of Oettingen-Spielberg. The wedding was held at the bride’s castle in Bavaria, and in 2019 they had a daughter, Romy Jane Percy – the Duke and Duchess of Northumberland’s first grandchild.

It’s an appropriate match, given that he might one day inherit. Max may be the second son, but for now he remains the heir presumptive to his older brother. Earl Percy is still single, and, should he fail to produce a male heir, Max will inherit the title.

The Earl of Shaftesbury

The prodigal son: In 2005, New York-based DJ Nick, the second son of the 10th Earl of Shaftesbury, was living louchely in the Big Apple. Tattooed and long-haired, the 25-year-old epitomised the stereotype of the wild second son, free from the burden of inheritance. Then came the double-whammy tragedy that first saw his father brutally murdered by his third wife and her brother. Then, six months later, Nick’s older brother, Anthony, died of a heart attack, aged 27.

And so it was that Nick became the 12th Earl of Shaftesbury and owner of the beautiful but derelict 17th-century St Giles House in Dorset, along with 5,500 acres of parkland and farmland. Nick, now 40, exchanged his hedonistic ways for a life of duty and service, moving back to England to take over the management of the estate. ‘He even learnt to ride because he thought it was fitting,’ says his neighbour Lucy Pearson. It was short-lived, alas. ‘Another neighbour of ours took him on a riding lesson on a frosty morning. Nick fell on the frozen ground and fractured his vertebrae.’ He’s since taken up endurance running.

He is also now married – his wife, Dinah Streifeneder, is a German-born veterinary surgeon, with whom he has three children. ‘They are a lovely family,’ says Nick’s godfather Simon Elliott. And over the past decade the Earl and Countess of Shaftesbury have worked to restore St Giles House to its former glory.