

## Information sheet no 014

### Louis Mountbatten

Lord Mountbatten was born on 25 June 1900 at Frogmore House, Windsor. Mountbatten was the younger son of Prince Louis of Battenburg and a great-grandson of Queen Victoria. In 1913, he joined the Royal Naval College Osborne as a cadet. In July 1916, he was assigned to Admiral Beatty's flagship HMS *Lion* as Midshipman and in February 1917, transferred to HMS *Queen Elizabeth*. In July 1918 he was promoted to Sub-Lieutenant and appointed second in command of the patrol boat *P31*.

In 1919, Mountbatten was sent to Christ's College, Cambridge. Whilst at Cambridge, the Prince of Wales invited his cousin to attend him on the forthcoming tour of Australasia in HMS *Renown*, and for his services during that tour, was invited to join the royal tour to India and Japan in the winter of 1921-2, and it was in India that Mountbatten became engaged to Edwina Ashley and married her on 18 July 1922.

In 1923, Mountbatten joined HMS *Revenge* and specialised in radio communications. He was appointed as Assistant Fleet Wireless Officer (1927) and Fleet Wireless Officer (1931) and served in the Mediterranean and at Portsmouth. In 1932 he was promoted to Commander and in April 1934 he obtained his first command to the destroyer HMS *Daring* and subsequently commanded HMS *Wishart*. In 1936, he was appointed to the Naval Air Division of the Admiralty.

Since 1938, Mountbatten had been contributing ideas to the construction of a new destroyer named HMS *Kelly*, and in June 1939 was appointed as Captain. After the outbreak of the war, he was appointed to command the 5th Destroyer Flotilla. While assisting a mined tanker, HMS *Kelly* was also mined and badly damaged. The ship was later put out of action again after a collision with HMS *Mohawk* early in 1940. The ship played an important role in the evacuation of the allied force from Namsos in May 1940 following the German invasion of Norway.

On 23 May 1941, during the battle of Crete, the ship was sunk. More than half of the crew were lost but Mountbatten was one of the survivors. This was Mountbatten's last active sea command as he was then appointed Advisor on Combined Operations with the rank of Commodore.

In April 1942, he became Chief of Combined Operations with the concurrent ranks of Vice-Admiral, Air Marshal and Lieutenant-General. He oversaw successful raids on St Nazaire, Vaagso and Bruneval but also the disastrous raid on Dieppe. He made a large contribution in planning the landing operations in North Africa (1942) and Sicily (1943), and the planning of the Normandy invasion in 1944.

In October 1943, Mountbatten was appointed Supreme Allied Commander, South East Asia. In this position he set about raising the morale of the Allied forces in Burma that felt they were the 'forgotten army'. The re-conquest of Burma was finally achieved during 1945 and on 12 September 1945, Mountbatten accepted the formal surrender of the Japanese Expeditionary Force, Southern Region, in Singapore.



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In June 1946 Mountbatten was created Viscount Mountbatten of Burma. While preparing to return to his naval career, Prime Minister Clement Attlee requested that he undertook the role of Viceroy of India. The main task of this role was to oversee the transfer sovereignty of India from Britain to independent rule. Independence was achieved within five months of his arrival with the formation of two independent states, India and Pakistan.

At the end of 1947, he was created Earl Mountbatten of Burma and he continued to serve as Governor-General in India under the new constitution until June 1948. On his return home, he was promoted Vice-Admiral in 1949, and in 1950 appointed as Fourth Sea Lord, concerned with supplies and transport. From June 1952 he was Commander in Chief, Mediterranean Fleet and later Supreme Allied Commander of a new NATO Mediterranean command and established an integrated international naval/air headquarters in Malta. He was also promoted to Admiral during this period.

Mountbatten served as First Sea Lord between October 1954 and June 1959. In July 1959, he was appointed Chief of Defence Staff. His main achievement in this office was the reorganisation of the individual armed service ministries into a single Ministry of Defence in 1964. In July 1965 he retired from naval service. The Home Secretary asked him to lead an enquiry into prison security in 1966, in response to recent escapes. His report was completed in two months with most of the recommendations being implemented.

Although retired he remained active with various appointments including Colonel of the Life Guards, Governor of the Isle of Wight and Lord Lieutenant when the island received shire status in 1974. He was actively involved in a documentary about his life in 1966 and spent time running the family estate at Romsey and organising his large archive. In 1978, he opened the family home, Broadlands, to the public. During his lifetime, Mountbatten had received numerous honours and honorary degrees.

In May 1979, he delivered a major speech at Strasbourg on the need for arms control. On 27 August 1979 while on holiday at Classiebawn Castle in County Sligo, he was killed by an IRA bomb during a family sailing trip. Other members of the family were also killed and wounded. His funeral took place in Westminster Abbey and he was buried in Romsey Abbey.