



While Pat O'Neill is bottle-feeding two rescued baby baboons, her husband has to sleep in the gallery above her bed. As well as 19 baboons, Broadlands is home to 42 stray dogs, 200 parrots, 40 stud ponies and dozens of other assorted creatures

ANIMAL HOUSE

She started by adopting a baby lioness. Now this English aristocrat lives near Cape Town with several hundred beasts — and a store cupboard of dark secrets. Report by Caroline Phillips. Colour photographs: Robbie Cooper

Right: Broadlands stud farm near Cape Town. Far right: while Pat bottle-feeds a baby chimp, dozens of dogs enjoy her sanctuary. Far right, below: with Tana, the lioness she lived with for five years in Kenya

They call it, with some affection, Broadmoor. At least, that's what they say in the family. To others, however, it is Broadlands, the stud farm belonging to the horse breeder and animal conservationist the Hon Patricia O'Neill.

She has 42 stray dogs who move in packs through her house, and a kitchen carpeted with yapping Pekingese. She has also a donkey, jackal, lynx, chimp, 200 parrots, 40 stud ponies, a cage shared by a tortoise, cockerel, monkey and rabbit, plus 19 rescued baboons – some living in a room with filing cabinets and books. No wonder that a stern notice by the gatepost reads: "Danger. Giant apes, fierce dogs, wild agapanthus. All these and other species may be loose on the estate. Enter at your own risk. Close all windows."

Instead of sleeping with her husband, Pat shares the marital bed with two baby baboons whom she bottle-feeds four times nightly. The other day, she breakfasted with one at a five-star hotel and changed his nappies in the lavatory. In 1996, when Nigel Dempster met her at the races, her pet chimp was drinking beer and smoking.

It is 35°C and Pat, 74, is wearing an electric-blue cardigan, fluorescent pink lipstick, boots and lots of ethnic bangles. She has steely blue eyes, blonde hair and the universal look of an English ex-pat: a brown face wrinkled as the Sahara. She's shrewd, amusing, warm-hearted and fanciful. "I'm an eccentric," she declares.

Pat is the daughter of Brigadier General Frederick "Caviar" Cavendish – a highly decorated British cavalry officer – and of Enid, Countess of Kenmare, a legendary beauty who was rumoured to have been a murderer. Pat's stepfather, Viscount Furness, was a shipping and coal magnate and the sixth richest man in the world. As a child, she says, she was physically and emotionally abused. She grew up to become a much-pursued heiress who enjoyed a string of lovers. She lived briefly in the south of France before settling in Africa in the 1950s.

At lunch, Pat picks at a chicken carcass and a tray of vitamins, while her brother, Carryll, tells us how he yelled at a German visitor to close her car window. "Vot?" she asked, opening it – as a baboon snatched her

handbag and retreated to the roof, where he shredded her passport, plane ticket and banknotes. Another time, Pat was retrieving a rampaging primate while Carryll stood at the window, shotgun trained. "If you shoot her, I'll never talk to you again," shouted Pat.

Her house is in Somerset West, east of Cape Town. Once she had 300 acres, but now she has sold half the property. Is she still rich? "Totally poor. My mother left me £3m, a quarter of her money, when she died in 1976. But I've got practically nothing left," she says. "We had an accountant with power of attorney and the money disappeared. He never kept accounts and I poured away that money on 300 stud horses every year."

Her home, a Cape Dutch farmhouse, is decorated in a Bohemian version of colonial-Kenya-meets-English-country-house. There are four-posters, empire beds and chaises longues alongside sculptures of horses, cheetah and elephants. Then there are chintz hangings and ochre walls covered with ethnic art and paintings of racehorses. There's a watermarked photograph of Pat taken by the then Tony Armstrong-Jones, one of her circle. "I was practising smoke rings," she explains of the sitting. "At the time, Tony was living in virtual penury in a tiny flat in Eaton Square."

"It was actually in Pimlico Road and cost £2 a week, an awful lot then," said Lord Snowdon later. "I remember staying in La Fiorentina [their magnificent home in Cap Ferrat] and photographing the countess and her dining room, and the pictures came out all blurred. We'd all been sunbathing, and I'd put Ambre Solaire on my lens."

Her visitors' book boasts names such as Suffolk and Gloucester: the people, not the counties. Earl Spencer ("the most affectionate, loving father I've ever met," says Pat) lunches here, as do Prince and Princess Michael of Kent. Another friend was the late David Hicks, the

'I'M POOR. MY MOTHER LEFT ME £3M, BUT I'VE GOT NOTHING LEFT'



English decorator who married Pamela, daughter of Earl Mountbatten. "I'll never forget when David came to me and said: 'What shall I do? Should I marry her? As you know, Pat, I'm much more interested in men.' Well, what could one say?" And Carryll lives here for four months a year. It was Carryll – good looking, delightful – who taught the Duchess of York to fly.

Carryll is editing Pat's memoirs. "I'm trying to keep her out of prison," he explains. He has excised the paragraphs about a certain lady and her child who is allegedly the bastard son of the Duke of Windsor. "One always heard about this sort of thing when one was young," says Pat. Many of her reminiscences concern her mother and friends. She tells the story of Enid staying in

Kenya with Lady Idina Errol of Happy Valley fame, whose husband was murdered. She recalls how on Enid's return from dinner, she found an orgy taking place in Lady Errol's sitting room. "The book *White Mischief* apparently described my mother as having 'cold cruel eyes'," adds Pat. "So I didn't buy it."

She is writing her memoirs largely to restore the reputation of her late parent. The spur was an article in *Vanity Fair* in 1991 by Dominick Dunne that repeated the gossip about her mother allegedly being a murderer. Dunne maintained that Enid was hooked on rich husbands, gambling and heroin, speculating that she might have been the Lucrezia Borgia of Cap Ferrat. "We wanted to sue," Pat says, talking publicly for the first time



about the allegations. "But you can't sue on behalf of a dead person." She adds that a film company acquired the rights to the story, researched it extensively and, unable to find supporting evidence, abandoned the project.

Dunne defends his version. "Why did they drop the film? I can't recall exactly why. But it wasn't because the story wouldn't stand up," he said in New York. "The interesting thing about the Enid Kenmare story was that it was three friends of Pat and of her mother who came round to see me and suggested it."

☆☆☆☆☆
Pat was born on June 30, 1925. One of her earliest memories is of living in Lees Place, Mayfair, and being chauffeured with her nanny and governess to the park

because Enid never got out of bed before midday. "We had to walk Mummy's cheetah and silver foxes in Hyde Park on leads. As a child, you find this so embarrassing." She has only scant memories of her father, "Caviar", a "10-goal polo player who served with distinction in the Boer War and was badly wounded at Gallipoli". He died when she was six years old.

Two years later, her mother married Furness, a man who loathed children and who was so "wildly jealous" of Enid's lovers that "he bought the whole of Cap St Hospice with its six houses so no lovers could buy a house nearby". Furness owned two yachts, his own private train and platform, a De Havilland aeroplane – the biggest private plane in existence at that time – and had homes all over the world. It was said, but never proved, that he had murdered his first wife, Daisy, who was buried at sea. "Much as I disliked him, I don't believe that," says Pat.

She grew up at Burrough Court, his vast house in Leicestershire, which was razed during the war. "Children weren't allowed to be seen, and I had my own staircase, dining room and servants."

It was a lonely childhood of upper-class neglect. Rory, her half-brother by her mother's first husband, the American millionaire Roderick Cameron, was 13 years older than her and never at home because Furness resented his presence. Carryll, who was at Eton, was her sole playmate. "Otherwise, my friends were horses and dogs. I spent my time riding and studying. There was this longing to be with my mother when she was there. We were allowed to see her in the morning, and she would come to us in the evening before she went out."

Enid's lovers were legendary. "I was 10 years old when Carryll and I set booby traps at night-time by putting string across her bedroom door then hiding in the laundry cupboard, waiting to trip up her lovers," she laughs. "We always fell asleep and never saw any of our 'uncles'."

Furness guarded Enid zealously, often taking her away to Africa for months; and they spent much of the year in Kenya with his fleet of burgundy and yellow Rolls-Royces, which were converted into safari trucks → 37

Right: the dogs have names such as River and Pick-up, after the places where they were found. Far right: Pat entertains a white hunter friend in Kenya in the 1950s. Below left: her mother, Enid, with her fourth husband, the Earl of Kenmare. The fact that her husbands were rich and titled and died soon after marriage gave rise to gossip. Below right: Pat's father and Enid's second husband, polo-playing Frederick Cavendish, second left, in the early 1900s



with boots zinc-lined to keep the Dom Pérignon chilled. "Then I slept with a photo of my mother." Isn't that sad? "Well, she was very, very loving, and Carryll and I worshipped her. She was the most wonderful mother. Despite all her lovers, I felt secure in her love for me."

When the Blitz came, the family were at their villa in the South of France. "Furness had never been on public transport and refused to go in the evacuee boat. Mummy wanted me to go with her great friend Willie [Somerset Maugham]. I became hysterical. I was terrified of him." So they stayed behind. Their villa, La Fiorentina, was turned into the headquarters for the German high command, and Pat and her mother moved into Le Clos, "the dower house, as it were", perched on Cap St Hospice.

"Mother started saving shot-down British pilots, hiding them at home until they could be smuggled via agents to safety in Spain. Once, when the Germans came, we had three prisoners disguised as maids. Mummy even sent me on a bicycle to Nice with an English prisoner to get his papers," she says. In 1940, after Furness died, Pat and Enid managed to return to London using the pilots' route. "I think I was drugged. I've no memory of the train journey."

She remembers London at the height of the air raids. Enid, "who had no sense of danger and refused to allow the word 'fear' to be used in her houses", would summon her children to their balcony overlooking Park Lane to watch bombs dropping. "Mother used to say: 'Whoever counts the most bombs gets such and such.' So Carryll and I used to scramble to count as many as we could. One went through the bombing of London without knowing there was a dreadful risk."

She was educated at home until she was 19, although not by design. "I went to a convent school in Leicester for three weeks when I was about 10. But I locked the teachers and pupils in a classroom. So I never went to school again. I had a governess, nanny, tutor and a German teacher," she says. "Rory determined my education. He told my mother what he'd like me to learn. So there was a lot of ancient history and not much arithmetic." Pat read voraciously and retreated into a

dream world. For many years, she had a Swiss governess called Miss Unger. "Every time I opened my mouth, she'd say, 'Nobody's interested in what you have to say.'" Pat grimaces. "She'd take a horse-whip and beat me across the legs or smack me. It didn't have to be for anything serious. She'd do it even if I left a cupboard door open. Yet I'd save my pocket money and give it to her. I never dared tell my mother because she went away so much and I was frightened of what would happen." In addition, her governess refused to recognise any illnesses but her own. "I had whooping cough and measles without any medicine."

Pat became paralytically shy. "I was petrified of people. I was thought retarded because, until I was 20, I'd hide under the furniture when they came in. When I first started going out with men, Rory would write my conversation scripts."

Aged 23, Pat met her first husband, Frank O'Neill, on board a liner bound for Australia. An Olympic swimmer, he was on his way home after competing at the games in England. They were engaged by the time the ship arrived in Australia and married a year later. Her mother hired a yacht for the honeymoon. Frank was

the son of a swimming-pool attendant, and it was reported at the time that he was unable to cope with such a glittering world and jumped ship. "Actually, I refused to go on honeymoon because I was always seasick. So my mother and Frank went – and he jumped overboard to swim back to me."

They split up after three years. "I never wanted to get married. I'm like a wild animal and didn't ever want to feel imprisoned. Frank had hundreds of girlfriends. He disappeared with all these women, including my best friends and their mothers. I didn't mind – she grates her teeth – "because my mother had said: 'You must never ever be jealous.'" What was her own sexual behaviour like? "I was promiscuous briefly when I was young. People thought I was a tremendous heiress, which I was at one time, and all the male attention went to my head. I had lots of marriage proposals as well."

A year after her divorce, she married the improbably named Count Ayman de Roussy de Sales, whom she met in a nightclub. They wed in a registry office in New York and then lived with her mother. "He was divine. I adored Frank and I adored Ayman," she says. She suffered an ectopic pregnancy and was very ill. "Then Ayman left

me, went to New York and found someone else. Afterwards I wasn't able to have children. I'm sure if I'd had them I wouldn't have been able to enjoy the lovely life I've had with animals."

With two marriages behind her, Pat was only 31 and ready for adventure. On a visit to Kenya, she was met at Nairobi airport by a friend who turned up with a four-day-old lioness, Tana. Her mother bought her a farm in the Masai Reserve, and there followed a love affair with Tana and with Africa. "I house-trained Tana and she slept on my bed and followed me everywhere."

She claims Tana twice saved her life. "She jumped out of bed at 2am and started pacing up and down. So I charged off in the car and collected the police. When we returned, there wasn't a sound – it was so embarrassing. Then they went round the back of the building and a frightful gun battle broke out with the Mau Mau [freedom fighters]." She pauses. "Another time, Tana saved me from a herd of buffalo by throwing me to the ground and lying on top of me." Does she think animals superior to humans? "Well, I relate to them and pick up their emotions." With Tana, Pat felt safe enough to move to a remote game park in the Meru area. "It was 10 hours

by car from anywhere. You had to drive a day to see another white woman. You practically had to find me with a compass," she laughs. "I had a bush telephone that worked for just one hour a day."

She lived there with her lioness for five years. "I didn't have a husband. What kind of husband is going to want to live that life?" Apart from an affair with a white hunter and visits from her mother, she was alone. Because she kept aspirin in the house, Pat was regarded by the local Masai as a witch doctor. That she had a lion also endowed her with magic powers. Once a group of them consulted her. "They wanted to live in Kilimanjaro and asked me to influence the Queen of England accordingly. I explained that I didn't know the Queen. 'Of course you do,' they replied. 'You're *Tota ya Simba* (Child of the Lion).' After five years, a farmer moved to

'TANA SAVED ME FROM A HERD OF BUFFALO BY LYING ON TOP OF ME'

the area. When Tana was in season, sometimes 20 lions would cross his farm, causing his cows to abort. Realising she would have to release Tana into the wild if she were to mate, Pat acquired a pride of lions to help her on her way, then set Tana free.

Soon Pat was on the move again. Her mother was persuaded that the altitude in Meru was bad for her heart and went to live in Cape Town. "I couldn't let Mummy be at the other end of Africa." So in 1968 Pat moved to Broadlands. Here, there were to be yet more changes in her life. Frank, who had lost touch with her since they had divorced 19 years before, read about her in a magazine and got in touch. They remarried in 1974. "This time we've been together quite a while. Funnily enough, Ayman wanted to remarry me at about the same time." When did she chuck Frank out of the marital bed in favour of baboons? She looks startled. "I only started having baboons in bed when I came to South Africa." Now Frank sleeps in the gallery above her bed.

☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆
The key to understanding Pat's life lies in her relationship with her mother. "I worshipped my mother in life and haven't recovered from her death," she

says. "My passion is for animals and Mummy. That's why I never left her, remaining with her until she died. I always lived with her, even when I married. I only left her when Tana came into my life, and then she'd spend half the year with me in Kenya." In her memoirs, she says: "She was the most perfect of mothers, the most perfect of wives, and I'm sure the most perfect of mistresses... She gave us a life filled with love and caring. She turned everything she touched into beauty."

The film producer Anthony Watterson sees the situation differently. When he was researching his proposed movie about Pat's life, he noted "Pat's subservient, adoring relationship with her possessive mother... a mother who always controlled Pat."

Whatever the truth, her mother dominates many of her thoughts, not least because of the scandal attached to Enid's name. In 1913, she married the American millionaire Roderick Cameron, nearly twice her age. He died the following year, leaving her a tidy sum and a son, Rory. In 1917, she wed Brigadier General Cavendish, father of Pat and Carryll. He died in 1931, leaving her a considerable inheritance. Her third marriage, in 1933, was to Viscount Furness, heir to a shipping empire. When he died seven years later, leaving her a third fortune, people began to talk. It was rumoured that he had been drunk and that she had left him outdoors to die. Three years later, she married the Earl of Kenmare, formerly Viscount Castlerosse, a *bon vivant* known to love women and gambling. He had family estates in Ireland, but only a moderate income. When he died nine months later, it was whispered that Enid had administered a fatal injection.

Used to such rumours, Pat has an explanation for everything. Roderick Cameron, she says, died of cancer in hospital in New York, "and Mummy gave his fortune to Rory". Her own father, she says, was virtually penniless and died in Paris of a cerebral haemorrhage when her mother was in Biarritz. Furness ("almost an alcoholic, who also took morphine") died of cirrhosis when Enid was present. Kenmare suffered a heart attack in Ireland after one whiskey too many when her mother was away in England. The only discrepancy occurs later when she drops her guard and confides: "The only person you could plausibly have said that she murdered was Furness — because he was in the South of France and there was no way anybody else was there." She stumbles and corrects herself: "I mean, I was there."

Apparently Enid cared nothing for the scandal, indeed fed much of the gossip herself. "Before he knew her, Willie Maugham was at a Riviera lunch party and didn't realise my mother was there," says Pat. "Willie said, 'I hear there's a lady who lives in Cap Ferrat who has killed all her husbands.' My mother just laughed. When she became friends with Willie she was Lady Kenmare and Willie, who used to stutter a bit, started to introduce her as Lady K-K-Killmore and the name stuck. My mother brought much of this on herself, because she liked to joke that she'd murdered all her husbands."

"Once when she arrived in New York on the Queen Mary, the newspaper headlines read: Society Murderess Arrives. Another time, when she went to Australia, she turned to the waiting press who had asked how often she had married. 'Oh, four or five times,' she said. 'I don't bother with divorce; it's too messy. I just kill my husbands.'

"Even when Thelma Furness [Furness's wife before Enid] tried to get the Furness fortune by having my mother charged with murdering him, she just thought it was funny," Pat remembers. The case never went to trial. "I don't think she ever realised the serious implications of the things she said. I didn't either. You see, my mother was a very beautiful woman, not a murderess."

Enid was said also to be a heroin addict who hid her habit from her children. One day, Pat found one of her mother's syringes. "It's true, she did take morphine. But



Above: dining with Anne Beckhelling, a friend who runs a cheetah park, and Nyana, one of the residents. Right: fitting a nappy on an infant chimp



everyone did in those days. Before the war, the upper classes took a lot of drugs. At that time, you were given morphine for nearly everything. And she had," she says vaguely, "broken her back at one stage."

Her mother was famous also for her sexual conquests. The then Duke of Westminster was in love with her. "She was very insecure and always had to have a man or hundreds of men," Pat says. "I think the reason all these men loved her so much was because they wanted to protect her. She had a childlike quality. One said to me, 'You know your mother needs looking after. In many ways you're older than your mother.' I think I did protect her."

Those who knew Enid remember her as a temptress, but not, surely, a murderess. "Her eyes were hard, though that doesn't make her a killer," says an elderly man who knew her at the height of her fame. "But it always seemed odd that all her husbands were either extremely rich or titled, and died." "I wasn't saying her mother

actually murdered these people," says Dominick Dunne. "I was saying this was the legend. I don't think she killed them. I just wanted to show that her mother was very far from lily white."

Pat cares deeply about what is said about her mother, and nothing can besmirch her memory. She remembers how people would wait outside their Mayfair home to catch a glimpse of this renowned beauty, how she rode, shot, painted, dressed up, rescued prisoners, entertained, fished, laughed, cooked and did needlepoint to perfection.

There seems to be little Pat would change about her own life. She believes she leads a charmed existence with her animals, her husband and the comings and goings of friends and family. But not everyone appreciates her lifestyle. Last year, following the death of her husband, Lady Wyatt went to relax at Broadlands for two days with her daughter Petronella. On their first morning, Carryll went to Lady Wyatt's bedroom after the servants had found Petronella's bedroom empty and her bed untouched. "I found them huddling together in Lady Wyatt's bed, knees under their chins," he laughs. "They hadn't slept a wink. They'd been awake all night listening to strange screams and waiting for marauding animals or wild natives to break into their rooms." After breakfast, the couple fled ■

'IT'S TRUE ENID TOOK MORPHINE. EVERYONE DID IN THOSE DAYS'