The Telegraph Magazine
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THE A TEAM

MERYL STREEP AND TOM HANKS – TOGETHER AT LAST

THE NEW LADY LUCAN

Talks family secrets and big guns

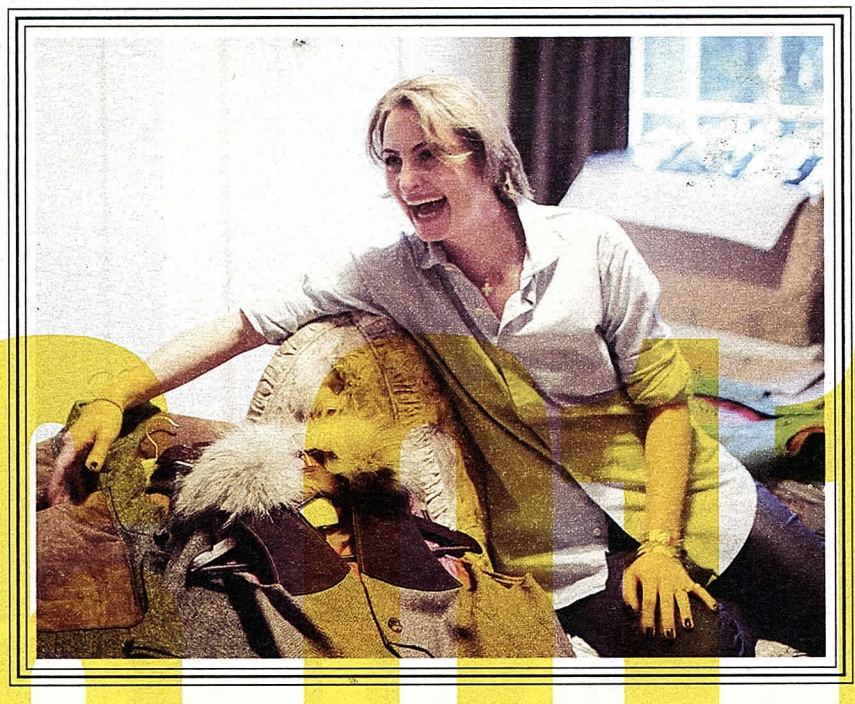
POWER PLAYERS

Behind the scenes in Obama's White House

PLUS

The Midults get January fever,
Simon Williams
hides the Hobnobs
& Rose Prince
makes one-dish wonders

The Telegraph Magazine



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Cover photograph by Brigitte Lacombe. Above: Lady Lucan, photographed by Gabby Laurent

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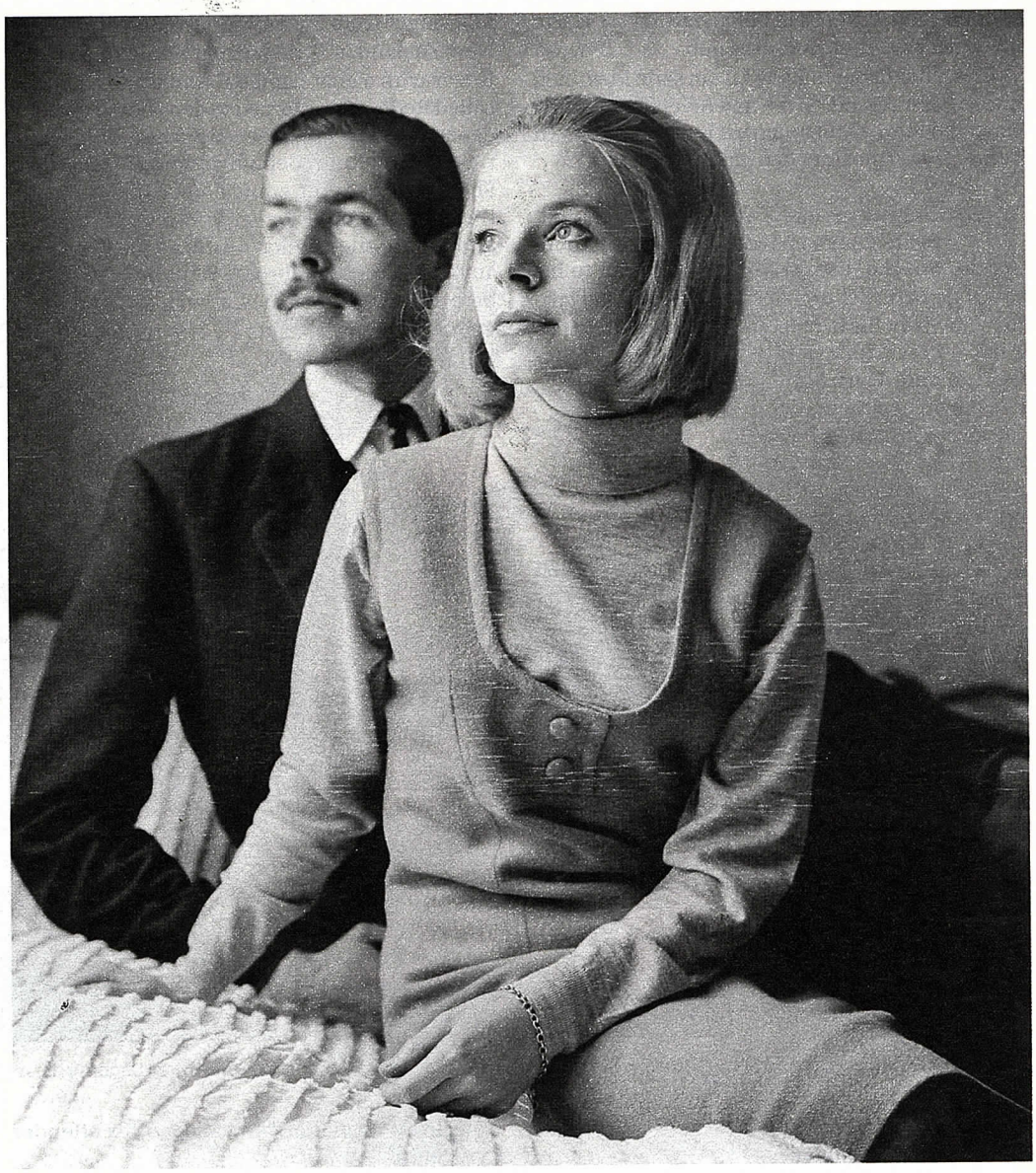
Left The current Lady Lucan. **Below** Her mother-in-law and father-in-law, Lord Lucan, in 1963



THE NEW LADY LUCAN

The family name comes with tragic – and scandalous – overtones but Anne-Sofie, the Countess of Lucan, wants to write a new chapter in the history of the dynasty.

By Guy Kelly. Photographs by Gabby Laurent

'THE THING YOU HAVE to remember is that I'm a Viking!' Anne-Sofie Foghsgaard advises, slapping her leather trousers with pantomime gusto. 'I'm Danish! From Denmark! Royalty and things like that don't mean anything like as much to us as they do to British people. So when I married my husband, I really never thought about the title.'

All things considered, that's probably just as well. Two years ago, when Anne-Sofie – a 40-year-old Danish heiress, entrepreneur and shooting enthusiast – married the investment banker George Bingham in London's Hanover Square, she officially became the 8th Countess of Lucan. Or the new Lady Lucan, if you'd prefer.

As an outsider, Anne-Sofie (known as 'Fie' to friends) considers the Lucan family name to be 'so beautiful' - and it's one she's delighted to take and pass on to Lady Daphne, her one-year-old daughter with George, the 8th Earl. It's a source of such pride, in fact, that Lucan is the name of the shooting-inspired outdoor-clothing brand she has recently started with the tailor Timothy Everest.

To most people in this country, though – particularly to those sentient in the 1970s and '80s – 'Lucan' isn't immediately associated with anything as harmless as 'tweed jackets that really pop'. Not yet, anyway. Instead, it's synonymous with one of the most enduring and mysterious crimes in recent British history – a story so bloody, tragic and seemingly never-ending that it sounds like fiction. To put it mildly, there's family baggage, and then there's Lucan family baggage. Better do a refresher, then, before getting back to those jackets.

On 7 November 1974, Anne-Sofie's father-in-law, Richard John Bingham – the 7th Earl of Lucan, a professional gambler and general man-about-town – disappeared without a trace. On the same night, at the family home in Belgravia, the Lucans' nanny, 29-year-old Sandra Rivett, was bludgeoned to death with a bandaged lead pipe in the dark of the basement kitchen. George and his sisters, Lady Frances and Lady Camilla, were

upstairs, as was their mother, Lord Lucan's estranged wife, Veronica.

When Lady Lucan investigated the commotion, she, too, was attacked. She ended the beating by grabbing her assailant's testicles, before escaping and, covered in blood, raising the alarm in the nearby Plumbers Arms pub.

The killer fled, but Lady Lucan soon identified him as her husband. Given that Rivett hadn't been expected to work that night, it is widely believed Veronica was the intended victim.

It certainly seems like it was Lucan whodunnit. He was nowhere to be seen, for one, but there was also the distressed telephone call to his mother, asking her to collect his children and take them to her home in St John's Wood near Regent's Park – close to where George and Anne-Sofie live now. Then there was the fact that Lucan's borrowed Ford Corsair was found abandoned at the port of Newhaven in Sussex. The car was spattered with blood, and had a bandaged lead pipe covered in Rivett and Lady Lucan's DNA in the boot.

The police declared Lucan the prime suspect, and with no clue as to his whereabouts, the newspapers were left to have a field day – or rather, many, many field days over decades. And why not? This was the story of a dashing aristocrat with a love of fast cars and connections to royalty, murdering the wrong woman in London's most exclusive area, within yards of his young children, before seemingly heading overseas to live out the rest of his days in hiding.

Above Lord and Lady Lucan married in London in 2016. **Above** Shooting near Winchester, 2015

It was Cluedo, but with less relatable characters. It was an Agatha Christie tale with an invitation for the readers to dream their own ending. It was all great fun, basically, except if you were in any way involved.

Anne-Sofie, who had no idea about the family history when she met George at 'a Viking-themed party at somewhere like the Dorchester' more than a decade ago, thinks it is high time we got something else to obsess over.

'Yes, because it's incredibly boring,' she says, with a sigh. 'It was a very, very dark time for my husband, because he lost a nanny, he lost a father and he also lost a mother. They [the three children] were removed, and made wards of the court. Social services took them from the care of their mother. Everybody would like to just move *forward*.'

We will, but let's finish the story first. Despite dozens of false alarms, the 7th Earl has never been seen since that fateful night. Or has he? Over the years he was 'spotted' in Colombia, Gabon, France and countless other places, while an ex-Scotland Yard detective traced Lucan to Goa in 2003, but that turned out to be Barry Halpin, a folk singer from Merseyside. Four years later, in New Zealand, a British expat living in his Land Rover with a goat named Camilla and a possum called Redfern was forced to deny being the murder suspect live on television. The *Sunday Sport* reported a definite, definite sighting of him riding Shergar, his equine equivalent; and throughout the 1980s *Spitting Image* had a puppet Lucan appear in the background of sketches set anywhere vaguely abroad. Sometimes he would be a waiter, sometimes a barman, and once, memorably, his head popped up from inside the trousers of former MP and alleged sex offender Cyril Smith.

The Lucan children – George, his elder sister Frances, now a lawyer, and his younger sister Camilla, a QC – have never accepted their mother's version of events, and maintain their beloved father's innocence. He was declared legally dead in 1999, and 17 years later, in February 2016, a death certificate was finally granted, and George inherited the earldom.

George and his sisters were raised predominantly by their aunt, Veronica's sister, after their mother's failing mental health contributed to social services stepping in permanently. Once separated, the relationship between the dowager countess and her children fell apart. For more than 40 years she lived as a recluse in the Belgravia house once occupied by her husband, never speaking to her family and giving only the occasional interview – in which she would generally insist Lord Lucan 'did the noble thing' and killed himself. Last September, aged 80, she was found dead at home. It was 'unexplained', the police said, but there was no suggestion of foul play. In the end, she never patched things up with George, met Anne-Sofie or saw Daphne, her granddaughter.

'Her death was very hard for the whole family because she was their mother. And I was very sad too. I was grateful to Veronica because she gave birth to George, but there's something very tragic about having a mother-in-law who doesn't want to see you, who doesn't want to see her grandchildren and doesn't want to see her own children,' Anne-Sofie says. 'I know for a fact that George and his sisters, and Veronica's sisters and mother, tried persistently to get in touch with her, but she ignored them.'

Anne-Sofie extended an olive branch too. She hand-delivered letters, invited her mother-in-law to the wedding, and she and George once asked her for tea at the Goring hotel, two streets away from Veronica's home.

'I never heard anything. It's very sad, because it would have been wonderful if I could have met her, and wonderful if Daphne could have.'

As for the case, Anne-Sofie won't speculate on what really became of her father-in-law, but she's unwavering in her support for George and his sisters' position.

'Frankly, I don't really care [what happened], in the sense that time moves on. This generation is not interested in those things, but being a foreigner, one of the things that I really appreciate about British society is its sense of fairness. And this fairness to me is embodied in the judicial system,' she says, quickly and firmly. 'John, George's father, never stood trial, and I firmly believe that everybody is innocent until proven guilty in a court of law. It's so long ago, it's time to let go and focus on something else.'

She looks around her beautiful flat to find that something else to focus on, settling on Everest, who is sitting next to her and modelling an elegant Norfolk jacket from their clothing venture. 'Like this!' She gestures wildly. 'Like this amazing collection we've done with Tim. That's a much better thing to focus on, isn't it?'

Oh, all right.

The sybaritic and admittedly very impressive collection – made up of coats, jackets, vests, capes, trousers and caps – was spurred by Anne-Sofie's love of both shooting and the British countryside.

It was Cluedo, but with less relatable characters. It was all great fun, except if you were in any way involved

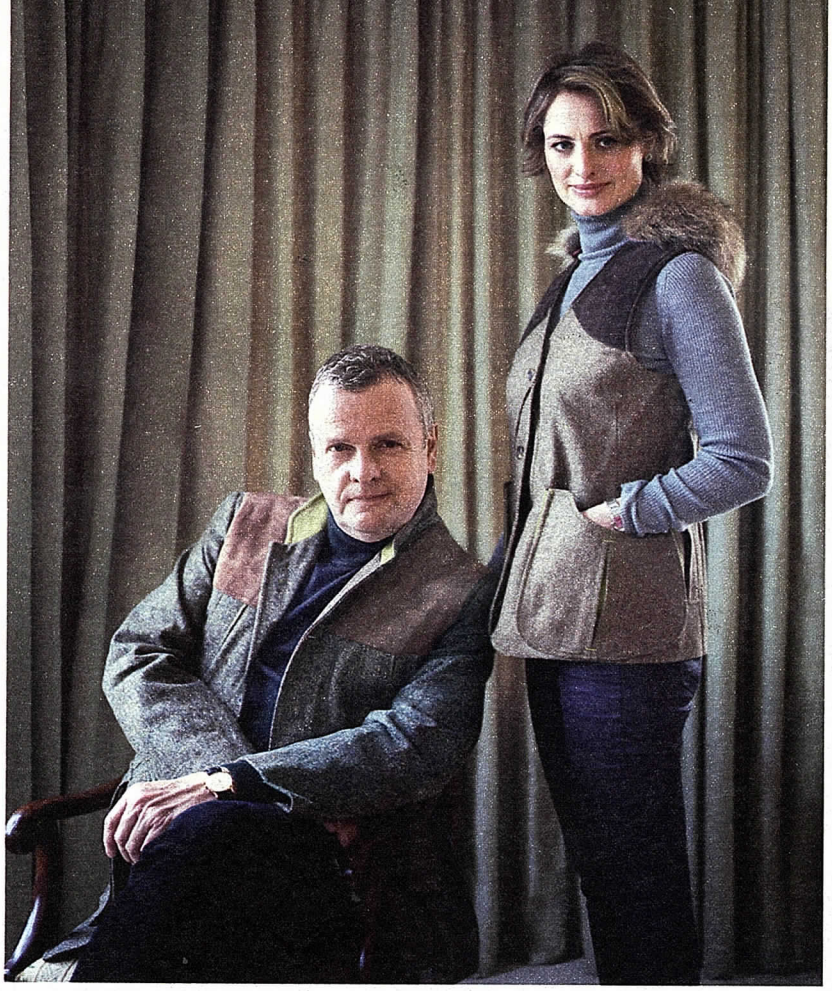
She is the daughter of a millionaire Danish industrialist who once owned Scotland's most expensive luxury estate, the Spott Estate in East Lothian, and moved to Britain when she was 16, attending Gordonstoun and the Courtauld Institute of Art.

Growing up more of an equestrian fan, she resisted shooting until she was 23. 'A fire instantly lit up in my heart,' she says, in her Scandi-soaked RP, of that first trigger-pull. 'It was exciting, and a challenge. Every demographic of person is on a shoot, and you get to see the countryside and be in nature. It's a wonderful day.'

She turned out to be a terrifyingly natural shot, and soon became a rare female 'gun' (professional shooter), taking part in various disciplines in competitions all over Europe. In 2012 she won a European championship for box-pigeon shooting, and has represented Team GB and France, as well as creating her own shooting-events business, Fie's Club.

Today, she still gets out with a rifle as much as possible. She owns around a dozen guns ('I could *always* have more. It's never enough'), smokes cigars and eats what she kills. That which she can't cook, she donates to friends. Her GP in London is a fan of pheasant.

'Whenever I see him for an appointment at the surgery, I go with about 40 birds,' she says, laughing a lot. 'I'm not even kidding.'



Lady Lucan with the tailor Timothy Everest, with whom she produces her clothing line

After meeting Everest, who went on to make her wedding dress, four years ago, the pair became firm friends and got talking about the clothing Anne-Sofie wears out on the moors.

'She said the things that were ergonomic weren't stylish and the things that were stylish weren't ergonomic,' Everest recalls, chipping in. 'I brought her a load of stuff, and she explained what was needed. She gave the impossible brief of asking for clothes she could wear out to dinner on one night and then out shooting in the morning. So, with her experience and my background, we put some pieces together that might work.'

Everest has dressed everybody from Mick Jagger to David Beckham, and the hallmarks of what makes his work so respected is in every piece. All handmade from British materials at his Spitalfields atelier, they are beautifully crafted. The gargantuan pockets and classic colours of traditional shooting clothing are there, but the cut is stylish and the flashes of colour playful.

'It's so versatile, all this,' Anne-Sofie says, grabbing a herringbone vest with furry collar. 'Racoon fur, ethically sourced. It fits your gun, but I wear that walking down the high street. I can wear it with my Hunter wellies, but with a pair of Louboutins it looks fantastic.'

I'm absolutely sure she's right. Nothing from Lucan comes cheap, by any stretch: the best ladies' coat will set you back £1,200, but Everest counters that by stressing that it takes 42 hours to sew one, so really it's 'quite fair'. After launching in September, they have begun with a pop-up shop in Petworth in the Cotswolds and an online store, but hope to reach a broader audience over the next year or two. Not just people who shoot, anyway.

The 8th Earl of Lucan, appropriately enough, is nowhere to be seen (he's at work), though he serves as the brand's financial director. Of a weekend, he prefers backgammon and sailing to shooting, but he models the collection frequently.

'I'm blinded by how handsome he is when he wears it,' Anne-Sofie swoons. 'We never bonded over shooting and he very rarely comes with me, but it's nice to have separate things.'

The couple dated soon after their Viking-party meeting, before breaking up and remaining close friends for almost 10 years. They rekindled their relationship a few years ago, quickly deciding to marry.

'We bonded over our sense of humour, and laugh such a lot together. He's warm and kind, and very bright. A real superbrain, actually. Cambridge, photographic memory, speaks Arabic, Russian, French, German...'

Whenever George, who is 50, has been forced to make a statement outside court in relation to his father over the past few years, Anne-Sofie – tall, elegant and always turned out immaculately – has been by his side. In the hallway of their flat, where they have lived for 18 months, photographs of their wedding day pop up on every surface.

They seem very much in love, and besotted with Daphne. It's all hands on deck: by day, Anne-Sofie works on the brand at home, or occasionally in Spitalfields with Everest, while George has commitments in the City, but gives extra time to Lucan while she's on shoots and he's at home with Daphne. When they're both around and off the clock, it's mainly 'chillaxing, watching zombie movies or Netflix' – and that is absolutely not a sentence I ever thought I'd hear a countess say.

Just like the – how should we put it – whole business about the murder, George's aristocratic status never gave Anne-Sofie pause for thought.

'We're all just normal people; we don't turn up on a white horse in armour. I accept him for what he is, and he accepts me for what I am,' – here it comes again – 'a Viking!'

When the business was in development, Everest pushed for the name 'Lucan'. He points out that there were six other earls before the infamous one. The third, for instance – another George – was instrumental in ordering the disastrous Charge of the Light Brigade and created a way for Jewish people to sit in Parliament.

'This family goes back generations,' he says, 'and unfortunately there was one generation where something went wrong. Now, in 2017, we've got this lovely couple who are doing something different. You can't be tagged with that for the rest of your life.'

Despite that, Anne-Sofie insists it isn't their intention to 'revive' the family name for the 21st century. 'Oh, there was certainly no need to rebrand. I'm a daughter of an entrepreneur, so it's in my soul and blood. I want to build an exciting business with a very skilled tailor, and to do that with my husband is incredibly romantic,' she says, smiling. 'Don't you think?' *houseoflucan.com*

'There's something very tragic about having a mother-in-law who doesn't want to see you, or her own children'