

Pop star paid visit



David Cassidy takes tea with Belinda, Lady Montagu, in 1973. Below, Cassidy goes for a drive with Lady Montagu. Picture: National Motor Museum

HE WAS the American pop idol who had millions of female fans across the globe.

David Cassidy was an actor and singer-songwriter who shot to fame after appearing in a musical sitcom called *The Partridge Family* in the early 1970s.

The series was phenomenally successful but fame started to take its toll on the show's young star, whose public appearances sparked mass hysteria.

Now the Beaulieu Estate has unveiled a riverside information board commemorating a secret visit he made to the area almost 50 years ago.

The 22-year-old Cassidy was at the height of his fame when he stayed with the former Lord and Lady Montagu at their ancestral home, Palace House, in 1973.

He took tea with Lady Montagu and even went fishing with her while dressed in a full-length fur coat.

The information board says Cassidy, who was on a UK tour, stayed in the New Forest "to

Chris Yandell

escape the clamour of adoring fans".

The current Lord Montagu, whose father died in 2015, agreed to install it after being approached by Sharron Liddle, who runs a Facebook group called The David Cassidy Legacy Group of Great Britain.

The board beside the Beaulieu River features photographs of Cassidy during his stay in the village, plus a newspaper cartoon showing him with his hosts.

Another Facebook page says Cassidy had fond memories of staying at an English stately home.

It quotes the former Lord Montagu's butler, Trevor Barnfield, as saying: "David had to be kept pretty secret because he had a really big following among young girls and there was a worry that he would be mobbed."

But news of his presence in the area inevitably leaked out.

An American reporter covering the tour wrote: "The teenyboppers have crawled through the undergrowth to give some proper English butlers a few anxious moments."

After launching his solo musical career Cassidy was briefly the highest-paid entertainer in the world.

But the dangers associated with what the media dubbed "Cassidymania" were laid bare a few months after his visit to Beaulieu.

Nearly 800 people were injured in a crush in front of the stage at London's White City Stadium on May 26 1974. About 30 fans were taken to the hospital, including a 14-year-old girl who died four days later without regaining consciousness.

Cassidy, who was married and divorced three times, was one of countless celebrities to have visited the Beaulieu Estate over the years.

He died aged 67 in November 2017 after suffering liver and kidney failure.

