

impressed a pupil's father who then recruited him to a job on Wall Street. Epstein used his mathematical knowledge to develop complex formulae that could be applied to financial markets, especially in the area of currency exchange. He went on to form his own company and began advising Leslie Wexner, the billionaire creator of the Limited Brands group, which owns, among other extremely successful companies, Victoria's Secret and La Senza. Some on Wall Street believe that Wexner is the source of Epstein's fortune, although the version Epstein seems to prefer is that he advises a number of very rich clients. Intriguingly, he is said to have a permit to carry a gun. Epstein's talents are not restricted to mathematics. He plays the piano to concert standard (there is a nine-foot Steinway grand in his house) and he cultivates Nobel Prize-winning scientists with whom he engages in arcane conversation.

'Ghislaine was totally in thrall to him,' Rupert Fairfax said. 'The death of her father left a terrible gap in her life and Jeffrey filled it. I remember seeing them together in Aspen. Jeffrey was everything to her. He lifted her up at a time when she was very down.' Ghislaine's friends have asserted that she desperately wanted to marry Epstein, but that their romance turned into what one has described as 'an affectionate business relationship'. Epstein provided Ghislaine with a home, a beaux-arts townhouse on the Upper East Side close to his own residence. He also gave her the wherewithal to run it in a grand manner; she employed a substantial staff, including a full-time butler and maid who had their own quarters at the property. Ghislaine appeared effortlessly to establish herself as one of New York's leading socialites. Witness, for instance, the party she threw for Allegra Hicks, the designer ex-wife of Ashley Hicks, a grandson of Earl Mountbatten and second cousin of the Prince of Wales. The 80 guests at Ghislaine's house included Hollywood actor Matthew Modine, at least one Rockefeller, a Radziwill and numerous billionaires. After toasting the future of Allegra's new shop in New York with vintage Dom Pérignon, Ghislaine took her guests to the library, where the books had been given fake spines with titles naming her friends. The party, like many she hosted, was a triumph and her success gave the slightly gauche Epstein a social entrée that had thus far eluded him. She is credited with helping him forge a friendship with Bill Clinton, among other figures of influence.

But even Epstein could scarcely have imagined she would create an opportunity for friendship with a member of the British royal family – Prince Andrew, whom she appears to have met in London when he was

working at the Ministry of Defence. At the turn of the millennium, Ghislaine and Andrew were hardly ever apart, enjoying eight different jaunts together in the space of a year. In February 2000, they holidayed in Palm Beach. Then they travelled to New York for a fashion show. A month later, Andrew was back in New York at a fundraiser for the London Symphony Orchestra, again accompanied by Ghislaine. A few weeks after that, Andrew returned for another round of socialising with Ghislaine. The following month, they met up for another holiday in Florida. In the autumn, Andrew flew to New York, where he and Ghislaine were spotted together. Just before Christmas, Andrew gave a house party at Sandringham to mark Ghislaine's 39th birthday. A few weeks later, in January 2001, they were on holiday again, in Phuket. What was going on? Was it a romance? No, said informed sources. Because on at least five of the eight occasions when Andrew and

Ghislaine were together, Jeffrey Epstein was there as well. Andrew invited them both to Windsor for the Queen's birthday party. One of Epstein's friends, Nobel Prize-winning scientist Murray Gell-Mann, said he understood that Epstein had given the Queen financial advice.

After almost 10 years together, Ghislaine had become what Epstein characterised as his 'best friend'. He once denied that she was on his payroll, but *Tatler's* inquiries suggest that her financial interests lead directly back to Epstein. In 1995 a company called Ghislaine Corp was registered in Florida, with offices at Epstein's Palm Beach address. Whenever Ghislaine is asked what she

does, she says she is managing director of a company called New York Strategy Group. Not much is known about this company except that, according to records, it is in the business of investment counselling. That is Epstein's area of expertise and closer inspection shows that New York Strategy Group is just another part of his financial empire. So if Ghislaine really does work for Epstein, what does she do?

There is, in fact, a clue buried in the court documentation from Pennsylvania. In 2003 a writ was filed by Nelson Shanks, the celebrated portraitist whose sitters have included Pope John Paul II, Ronald Reagan and Diana, Princess of Wales. Shanks claimed that he had been hired to paint the clothing billionaire Leslie Wexner, his wife Abigail and their children. Yet when Shanks finished the picture, Wexner refused to pay for it, owing \$339,000. When Shanks sued for his money – successfully, as it turned out – he also named Jeffrey Epstein and Ghislaine Maxwell. It was Ghislaine, he said, who had approached him and arranged the deal with Wexner. Epstein was also involved, he said. It

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Below, from left, Ghislaine with Imran Khan; Keith Richards; and Yasmin Le Bon

