



Langtry Manor

A Brief History

Emily Charlotte LeBreton was born on 13th October 1853 in the village of St. Saviours on the Isle of Jersey. She was the only daughter of Jersey's Dean and was reported to be as outgoing and outspoken as her five brothers.

As a young woman she had many admirers. Amongst them was Edward Langtry a man of substantial wealth who she married and persuaded to move to London with her.

Attending her first social engagement she met the artist Millais who asked Lillie if she would sit for a portrait. Later Millais' portrait entitled 'The Jersey Lily' was to win accolades three times over a space of fifty years and was the painting that would launch Lillie's career as a professional beauty and later as an actress.

Lillie was soon keeping the company of the most prominent figures of the day including Oscar Wilde and Prime Ministers Disraeli and Gladstone. Inevitably the Prince of Wales requested a meeting with her. The attraction was instant and although the Prince was already married to Alexandra their affair blossomed and Edward offered to build her a house away from London and the glare of society.

He purchased a lease to a plot of land in a secluded area of Bournemouth's East Cliff and told her that she could design a home for them. Where others would have preferred jewellery and gowns Lillie was very practical and considered land and property to have lasting value. Designed by Lillie, it was named The Red House - now Langtry Manor – and once the love nest of a King.

The double height 'King's Room' is unique, its walls feature original paintings, and the pair's love of the theatre was reflected in the huge carved oak fireplace with hand painted tiles showing scenes from Shakespeare in blue and white enamel with gold leaf.

Lillie enjoyed designing her romantic Royal Love nest, adding many personal touches. The foundation stone shows ELL (Emilie Le Breton Langtry) and the date of construction - 1877. The King's Room's lofty ceiling was also specially designed by Lillie to disperse his cigar smoke!



Lillie was determined to stamp her personality on the building. On entering, her friends would be welcomed with the greeting '*and yours my friends*' meaning this is your home too – a sentiment we echo today as we welcome our guests. On the outside wall of the King's room the motto '*Dulce Domum*' (Sweet Home) and on the other side of the building '*Stet Fortuna Domus*' (may fortune attend those who dwell here) can both be seen if you look upwards to the half-timbered first floor elevations.

No royal retreat would be complete without a magnificent Dining Salon. Lillie hated dark wood and as featured in the rest of the house, the wood was painted with the new white enamel. Beneath the minstrels gallery a self explanatory statement for all to see '*They say What say they? Let them say*' showing her disdain for those who might criticise her relationship with the Prince. Carved into the inglenook fireplace are the letters 'ELL' and in the stained glass window pairs of 'lovers swans' - Lillie didn't want to leave anyone in doubt as to who her benefactor was, she even had curtain tie back hooks with the Princes own three feather emblem. A humorous feature of the Dining Salon is the peephole from which His Royal Highness could view his guests before deciding to descend.

The building work did not proceed at the pace the couple desired. The English masons were on strike and others had to be imported from Holland. Meanwhile the couple made use of the nearby home of Lord Derby.

Lillie and Bertie were delighted with the home that she had made for them whenever they could find time together..... Picture the scene, Lillie is waiting for her Prince and sits in anticipation glancing frequently out of the window in what is now the St. Helier Room; with the diamond ring he gave her she lovingly scratches her initials and intertwined Love Hearts. This feature, along with many others previously mentioned can still be seen today along with a small display of memorabilia, artefacts and images tracing Lillie's life story.

A controversial feature of the building is a stained glass window dated 1881 on a staircase close to this display, commemorating the birth of Lillie's daughter Jeanne Marie who was born in Paris and was attended by the Prince's own Physician. A rumour was spread that the child was fathered by Prince Louis of Battenberg, the Prince's nephew, who soon rose swiftly through the ranks of the British navy. Jeanne Marie was brought up as Lillie's niece and was only told who her father was on the eve of her wedding day.

Lillie died at the age of 75 in Monaco and she was buried in Jersey – the island of her birth. The news of her death went around the world and newspapers proclaimed that it was the end of an era.....