

## **THE PLEAUNCE – A SHORT HISTORY**

In 1886 Cyril Flower, an heir to the Flower's Brewery fortune and his bride, Constance de Rothschild, a member of the Banking dynasty were looking for a home in Norfolk. On the recommendation of their friend, Lord Suffield, an estate with two small villas was purchased by them and a young up and coming architect, later Sir Edwin Lutyens, was engaged to design a mansion. In 1888 The Pleasaunce was built with gardens designed by the famous Gertrude Jekyll. The Pleasaunce cost £70,000 to build.

Lord Battersea represented the British Government abroad – he was also for many years MP for Battersea; he was later created a Lord and Whip in Gladstone's Liberal Government of 1892. He died, childless, in 1907 and his wife, whose portrait is in the stair-well, died in 1931. The estate came on the market in 1936 and was purchased for a fraction of the original cost (owing to the perceived risk of coastal erosion) by Lancs and Cheshire Federation CEHH, later CEHH Ltd and now CE Holiday Centres Ltd. The house was officially opened on 22 May 1937 by Jean McKellen, granddaughter of Mrs McKellen, the original conceiver of the CEHH concept.

It has been continually in use from that date, except when requisitioned by the military for use during the Second World War. The house still holds many of the treasures collected by the Batterseas. Look out for the Moroccan Door, with the Arabic inscription reading ' In the name of God the Compassionate, the Merciful', the three Japanese silk paintings, the brass lamp globe in the entrance hall, the lantern in the lounge window, the de Morgan fireplaces in the Library , Drawing Room and Sandringham Bedroom. The hinges on the Library window shutters and some bedroom shutters, the three Italian staircase lanterns taken from Venetian gondola and others which are all described more fully in the guide by Monica Sykes, one of the CEHH former hostesses and on sale here.

Many famous people have visited or slept here at The Pleasaunce including Gladstone, Disraeli, The Bishops of Norwich, King Edward VII, Queen Alexandra, The Tsarina of Russia. Again the book on sale enlarges on these details – why not buy one and see who slept in your room! Literary figures include Florence Barclay, the Hon Emily Lawless and Paderewski – the Polish pianist, composer and politician who played the grand piano in the Drawing Room.

Since 1936 the house has been used by holiday makers, church groups, and other special interest groups and schools who have appreciated its setting and its peacefulness. Countless hymns and prayers have ascended from within and many have come to know that Christ is their Saviour. Long may this house continue to be used to His Glory.

As Lady Battersea said:

*“The characteristics of The Pleasaunce are, homeliness grafted on to much of great beauty, and cheerfulness independent of company. It is a rare place for quiet hours of devoted study, and also a rare place for happy communion with nature. Long may it remain so.”*

Meaning of the word ‘Pleasaunce’ as suggested by Lord Morley to the Flowers:

*“A Pleasaunce is a medieval word meaning a garden with open walkways where ladies and gentlemen may take the airs.”*