

Hello I'm Dominic West and I'm a proud Ambassador of The Landmark Trust. You're listening to the Landmark Trust Podcast. In this series we're exploring the stories behind Landmark's remarkable buildings.

Dunshay Manor is an exquisite property in an exquisite location. It is set in its own wooded valley, surrounded by oak trees and cow parsley and wildflowers and undulating hills and in the distance you can just see the extraordinary silhouette of Corfe Castle hovering away on the horizon. It is located in the heart of the Isle of Purbeck an area that is famous for its limestone and marble that has been quarried here since as far back as Roman times and the property itself as it now survives is made from that remarkable stone.

There has been a property on this site for as long as we know, I mean it's so old that we know that in the early 13<sup>th</sup> century the owner of Dunshay offered to provide marble for the building of

Salisbury Cathedral. So we know that Dunshay was here before Salisbury Cathedral. Over the centuries it passed from one important Dorset family to the other and as you walk around the property you can see that it is, encrusted almost with that long and eventful history. On one side actually just above me where I'm sitting, on one side of the building there is a headless statue in a niche that is called 'Old Pike' but is probably a statue of John Dolling who owned the property in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and he fought for the King during the civil war. On the other side of the house is, I must say a delightful piece of graffiti that, above a window in red ink just reads 'Cheese room' and we presume that is something to do with the window tax. This very unpopular toll was introduced in 1696 and it taxed windows of properties but if you were having an industrial room or a dairy or a cheese room, you were exempted from the tax.

Dunshay fell on hard times at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century it must be said and by the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century it was in a terrible state of disrepair. And that's why its new owner, who was this enigmatic naval officer called Guy Montagu Marston who travelled a lot, he was friends with people like Rupert Brooke and Aleister Crowley of all people, he decided to give it a full refurbishment and an arts and crafts makeover to refurbish the property and he gave it the arts and crafts atmosphere that in many respects it still has. So the great corner set fireplaces that were installed by Sturdy are still here, so too are some of the arts and crafts panelling and the wood of the staircase. But the property really came back to life in the 1920s when it was purchased by a very artistic couple. The Spencers purchased this property in 1923, George Spencer Watson was an accomplished society painter and Royal Academician. Hilda was a brilliantly original dancer and mime artist and together they brought this property back to a life that was intellectual, aesthetic and indeed bohemian. They even invited Karl

Jung along for tea at one point in the mid-1920s. They also had a daughter called Mary, now Mary spend a lot of her childhood growing up in Dorset and she came to love her time here. She was also deeply inspired by the local stone, the Purbeck stone that surrounded her and indeed one day, I think she was 13 years old, a local quarryman handed her his chistle and told her to have a go and she didn't look back from that point onwards. She decided to become a sculptor, she went on to study at the Royal Academy at The Slade and even under Ossip Zadkine in Paris. And she became a highly successful sculptor in her own right and she made this property a really special place. She had open house, friends coming and going, artists living in the studio, art historians living in the local caravan a wonderful atmosphere of family friendliness for the rest of her life and she in 2006 died and left the property to The Landmark Trust and now 13 years later it is open to the public.

Now I have always been a fan of the Landmark Trust I love the way that they look after our nation's heritage, but do it in a way that makes it available to the public in exciting and original new ways. They always do sensitive refurbishments and this is one of them it is beautifully done this property, beautifully and sensitively refurbished filled with artworks, sculptures, beautiful works of furniture the property is beautifully refurbished and very sensitively furnished surrounded by great pictures and sculptures, there are drawings by George that have been acquired at local auctions and it is a wonderful place for a family to come and visit we are a family of 9 here this weekend and we are having a wonderful time and the great thing also about Dunshay is that it is set in one of the most wonderful parts of the country and when you're here you can go to the Jurassic Coast, you can go to Swanage, you can do beautiful walks in all kinds of directions, so I highly recommend coming to try it out.