



History of Lodge Hill

In November **1828** the Lodge Hill estate was leased by the Bishop of Chichester on behalf of the Church Commissioners to Robert Watkins Esq. Fifty years later, in November **1878** the estate was sold to a London solicitor, Mr Murrough, who built the house, named it Watersfield Towers and lived in it for a number of years.

In **1901** it was sold to a Captain Campbell and then in **1905** to a barrister, Arthur Paddon, and his beautiful Irish bride Marion Scanlyn.

The Paddons refurbished the house, embellishing the towers, panelling the interior and laying out the gardens. The Paddon family's connection with the house lasted thirty years and the house then became the property of a retired Army man, Captain Waller, and under his command the estate began to grow.

The purchase of land from the Leconfield Estate extended the grounds westward and Captain Waller, and a business associate Mr. Chorley, obtained financial backing from the Earl of Iveagh and formed a company known as the Lodge Hill Estate Limited. Watersfield Towers opened its doors as a country hotel.

With the outbreak of the World War II in **1939**, the house, together with its thirty acres of land, was requisitioned by West Sussex County Council due to its outlook which extends over 40 miles. The hotel became the headquarters of the mobile A.R.P. Reserve and served as such until **1945**.

In **1946** the house and land were bought for £30,500 by the West Sussex County Council to provide a venue for education opportunities especially for young people, thus fulfilling the Council's obligations under the 1945 Education Act.

The Centre was named "The Lodge Hill Residential Centre" and remained under County Council ownership until 15th March **1999** when the newly formed Lodge Hill Trust purchased an 125-year lease of the centre for £720,000. Through public support the Lodge Hill Trust also raised enough money to make an Endowment Fund to be used in cases of emergency or necessity. £1m was raised in total. Since 1999 many additions have been added to the campsite and to the team-building activities in the woodlands. The residential building has been considerably improved and updated.

On 14th September **2005**, the West Sussex County Council sold the freehold of the Centre to the Lodge Hill Trust for £1.

During **2005** the old conference centre was knocked down and replaced by the Bradbury Meeting Hall, which was opened by Sir Matthew Pinsent, CBE, on 6th June **2006**. Over £1m was needed to pay for this building and all funding was found thanks to the generosity of many donors. On the same day the refurbished Studio was re-opened by Sylvia Countess of Limerick, CBE, and is now known as The Limerick Studio.

Youth groups encompassing every interest visit the Centre for short stay visits and Lodge Hill enjoys a great and growing popularity as a venue for numerous County, South East Region and national organisations.