



The Lord Bute Connection

The Highcliffe estate had originally been acquired by King George III's young Prime Minister, John Stuart, the third Earl of Bute.

After serving eleven years as an unpopular PM, the Earl, a keen botanist who later went on to help found The Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew, came to the New Forest in search of rare plants. Armed with his wife's money, he commissioned Robert Adam to design several buildings including a seaside mansion, then called High Cliff where in 1775 he commenced building his mansion.

Ironically, his love of plants would ultimately be his downfall – whilst stretching for a specimen on the cliff top, he toppled 28ft and injured his leg. He never fully recovered and died 16 months later in 1792.

High Cliff was left to Earl Bute's (or Lord as he could legitimately be called) youngest son, General Sir Charles Stuart, but without money to maintain it, he demolished the property and sold off most of the land.

Sir Charles Stuart's son, also called Charles and a distinguished diplomat,

set about restoring his inheritance and gradually re-acquired the land his father had sold. He purchased the remnants of the original mansion including the lodges – which are today utilised as suites of this very hotel.

He bought timber from St Petersburg, bricks from Spain and furniture from France. His pièce de résistance was a glorious carved oriel window where Henri IV had sat with his dying father.

It took Charles five years to build Highcliffe Castle which was finally completed in 1830. Now ennobled as Lord Stuart de Rothesay, he divided his time between Highcliffe and London.

When Harry Selfridge took the lease, Highcliffe had passed to a Rothesay cousin, Major General Edward Stuart Wortley who had fought with distinction in Sudan, Egypt and Afghanistan.

Harry found Highcliffe's history spellbinding and so he went on to become one of Highcliffe's most celebrated tenants!