



A Magical Place

WITH EVERYONE FROM WINSTON CHURCHILL TO THE ROLLING STONES HAVING ROCKED UP TO CASTLE LESLIE IN COUNTY MONAGHAN, YOU KNOW THAT THIS IS NO ORDINARY PLACE.

Sasha Pieterse, better known as Alison DiLaurentis of *Pretty Little Liars* got married here recently (as did many celebrities including Sir Paul McCartney). Sasha described the estate as “a magical castle in a faraway land.” And yes, even by Ireland’s standards, magical doesn’t begin to describe it.

History buffs will delight in the antiquity of the estate and in its many treasures. Where else might

you meet a family that can trace their ancestors back to Atilla the Hun?! Castle Leslie Estate’s colorful history is awash with politics, royalty and war. The Family’s non-conformist ancestors include warlike bishops, politicians, social reformers, agricultural innovators, philanthropic wives, fine pre-Raphaelite painters, furniture collectors, writers and war heroes. The Leslie family has lived on the estate since 1665 when the land was purchased with a £2,000-reward



given to John Leslie, the fighting bishop, by King Charles II. The Fighting Bishop's name is now given to the Leslie Estate gin. It sits on the gin wall in Snaffles, the fine dining restaurant, alongside another 99 varieties, offering a juniper jamboree to those tempted by a tippie.

The current Leslie in residence is Samantha (Sammy) who on inheriting the estate from her father recognized the family seat as a commercially viable opportunity that would not only ensure the future safekeeping of the estate and its history, but also prompt its regeneration. Sammy's ambition was to bring the estate back to life, gain sustainability through tourism and work symbiotically with local communities. She has achieved all of this and more. The last 27 years

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New conservatory at The Lodge

has seen the estate regenerate from a leaking seasonal tea rooms with a handful of part time staff to the current operations with a team of over 160 that includes not only the Castle, but The Lodge (main image), The Equestrian Centre, The Victorian Treatment Rooms, The Old Stable Mews and the Village Cottages.

"Castle Leslie Estate has massively expanded from its entrepreneurial beginnings to the €10 million business that it is today," explains CEO Brian Baldwin. "The last 27 years has seen the estate regenerate massively. In fact, in that time we've experienced a 300% growth in turnover." He attributes this to a number of key factors. "Our level of customer care is second to none, Castle Leslie Estate really and truly prides itself on excellent customer service and our staff right across the estate strive every day to go above and beyond their roles to offer exceptional service to our guests."



Brian Baldwin, CEO



Brian joined Castle Leslie Estate in 2008, and in 2018, after 10 years as General Manager he was appointed CEO, overseeing the entire operation of Castle Leslie Estate - the daily estate operation, investment and build projects and the safeguarding of the estate for the future. He describes the estate as being full of character, characters and personality and it is the ultimate Irish rural escape for anyone looking to get away from it all and experience something really different – which no doubt contributes to its popularity.

“We’re not just an ordinary hotel,” he explains. “We have a number of accommodation options on the estate from the very unique 5* experience at the Castle, the newly expanded Lodge, the Old Stable Mews and the Village Houses where we offer self-catering for families and small groups.

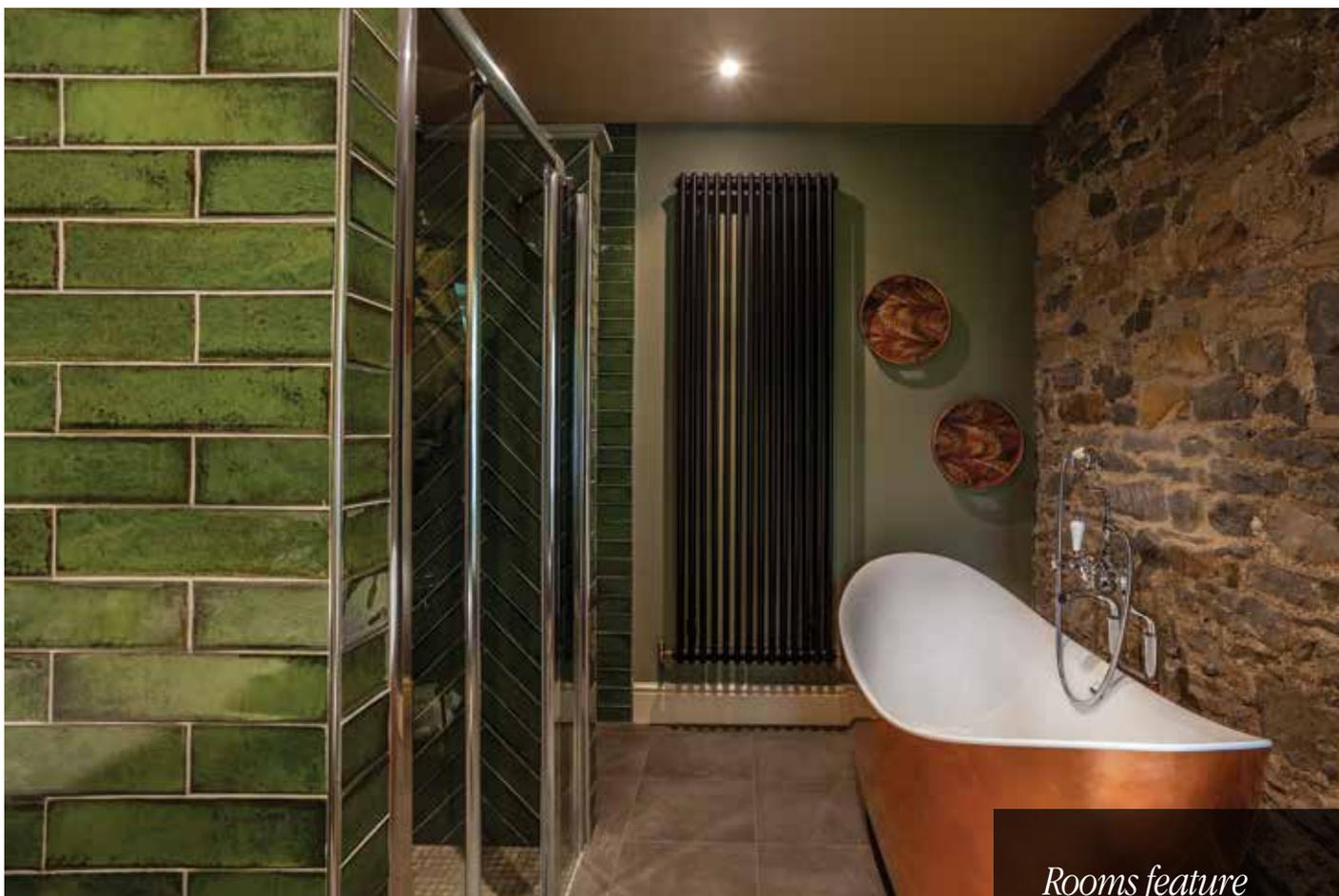
The Lodge at Castle Leslie is the social hub of the estate and home to Conor’s Bar, a snug cellar bar with roaring fire, cozy corners, a charming conservatory and fantastic casual dining. The Lodge is also a great place to stay in country house boutique style. Rooms feature spa style bathrooms

with deep roll-top baths, lavish decor and views of the Equestrian Centre or woodlands. In 2018 Brian and his team embarked on an ambitious project adding 21 new guest rooms to The Lodge in a very short period of time, bringing the total capacity to 50 rooms. It’s a wonderful story to tell. “We had a supply and demand issue,” Brian explains. “We have created such a demand for The Lodge that we were bursting at the seams! There were countless nights where we ran out of rooms and were refusing guest bookings so we expanded this fantastic product and the new rooms opened in July, running at full capacity all summer long.”

While the rooms are indeed a new addition it is difficult to see where the old Lodge ends and the new extension begins, such is the seamlessness of the build. There is still a wonderful sense of antiquity to the ‘new’ wing with generously proportioned bedrooms that are the last word in luxury; plush, immaculately decorated and many with private patios.

Needless to say, wining and dining are all pretty special too whether you want something casual

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from Conor's bar or a feast to the senses in the fine dining restaurant, Snaffles. "Food is very important to us at Castle Leslie Estate," Brian stresses. "We are striving to become one of the best food destinations in Ireland. It's not easy as there is so much competition but it is my hope that every guest has an amazing breakfast (it is the key to a good start of your day) and an exceptional evening meal washed down by something wonderful!" There are even plans going forward to extend the dining experience at the Castle by reopening the fine dining experience in the Castle Dining Room.

They say that good leadership trickles down from the top and with Brian Baldwin leading the charge it is easy to see how staff across the entire estate have mastered the art of making meticulous attention to detail and quality service relaxed and easy. Guests are treated more like family friends. Even dogs are welcome in the Old Stable Mews, and as this is one of the top 10 equestrian destinations in the world, your horse is welcome too if you choose to bring one. Even if horses aren't your thing, the boot room

is a fascinating place and you might don some wellies and go for a hike through the parklands near the old ice ponds where ice used to be cut for the castle, or lose yourself in the walled garden dating from the 1850s.

One of Ireland's most luxurious hotels in a unique village setting, there is a relaxed independence of spirit about the entire estate and it is very much at one with Glaslough village where the local community is proud to be part of its history. A true trophy town, Glaslough won a gold medal at the prestigious Entente Florale, the European Association for Flowers and Landscapes and it is easy to see why. A veritable blaze of color adorns the village houses with hanging baskets a 'plenty in this pristine, picturesque village.

The original dream for Castle Leslie Estate – great horses, good food and good old-style hospitality is flourishing. Just shy of two hours from Dublin and located on over 1,000 acres of breath-taking countryside in a glorious village setting, the short trip makes this an ideal escape.