

National Trust Properties

Little Clarendon

House & Home

Held in trust for the nation - but rented out to you

Not all National Trust properties are stately homes,

says Felicity Cannell

Grand Country House seeks Lord of the Manor. Aristocratic connections unnecessary, but the ability to smile as up to two million visitors tramp through your front door is absolutely vital.

The National Trust owns some of the country's finest major houses, most of which are open to members and the general public.

Less well known is its store of smaller properties - often bequeathed estate houses and cottages - available for rent to suitable tenants. These houses are unsuitable for permanent opening and need to be lived in to be looked after properly. Some of these are let on long leases at a premium (ie. you pay a lump sum on taking up the lease, from pounds 1,000 to pounds 100,000, as well as regular rent) and some are let on a short-term basis. Leases range from one year (renewable) to 20 years.

If you aspire to be Lord or Lady of the Manor, without the millstone of a leaky roof draining your pocket for a distant cousin to inherit, then a leasehold manor house may provide the opportunity for weekend house parties - circa 1930 - fishing parties and generally dispensing largesse to the locals.

The market rent is charged and will depend on the conditions of the lease. For example, the tenant may be obliged to open the house and gardens to the public on certain days, and there may be onerous repairs obligations. The importance of such properties would generally mean that buildings insurance is covered by the National Trust, although contents insurance would probably be hefty depending on how many members of the general public are tramping through the house.

Properties are advertised locally or sometimes nationally. Anyone interested should keep an eye on the local press and magazines such as Country Life, or register with an estate agent, although as many house hunters will know, this does not guarantee you will receive anything remotely suitable through the post.

Until recently, chance has played a big part in finding such properties, but in the Wessex region - Somerset, Dorset, Wiltshire and South Gloucestershire - a new database for smaller properties not open to the public has been set up for tenants in waiting. Customer requirements - type and size of property, land required - will be kept for 12 months after which clients must re-register.

Little Clarendon, a Grade II listed 16th century farmhouse in Dinton, nine miles west of Salisbury, is available for tenancy from Woolley & Wallis in Salisbury. The house was acquired in 1901 by George Engleheart, a daffodil grower who developed many new types of bulb, and was bequeathed to the Trust in 1941 by his wife. The gardens and certain rooms of historical importance are expected to be open to the public, probably one day a week.

The property comprises seven bedrooms, four reception rooms, stabling and other outbuildings. Adjoining the house is a Roman Catholic chapel. Some chapel duties will be required and the new tenant must be a Roman Catholic in line with the terms of the Little Clarendon bequest. "We often face a considerable challenge in finding a tenant who meets the criteria," says Celia Meade of the Trust's Wessex Region. "But most importantly, tenants must enjoy meeting the public and involving themselves in the history of the property. These houses are part of the country's heritage and our 2.4 million members are at liberty to visit."

(*The Independent* - Sunday 27th April, 1997)



Little Clarendon c 1950