



ESCAPE TO *Blantyre*

| BY TRACY BEARD

Blantyre lies on 110 acres in Lenox, Massachusetts, the Berkshires, an area recognized for grand estates, outdoor activities, stunning fall foliage, renowned art institutions and an incredible culinary scene. This prestigious summer playground is a legendary destination and one to add to your vacation list. Thick trees and foliage parallel the smooth-paved drive leading to the grand house and estate. As my friend, Gina, drove us toward Blantyre, I envisioned being transported back to a time when well-manicured horses pulled magnificent carriages along this same path. I could imagine men dressed in dark tuxedo jackets with matching vests and bow ties exiting the buggies. They would remove their top hats and extend a hand toward the carriage door. Ladies adorned in full-length decorative dresses would use one gloved hand to hold down their wide-brimmed hats tilted slightly to one side and then reach out with the other to accept assistance from their escort. The couples would make their way toward the door and enter the festive parties held at the opulent estate.

THE HISTORY

Robert Paterson learned about the Lenox estate that in 1900 comprised of a modest house, outbuildings, the carriage house stables and a potting shed. He and his wife Marie Louise purchased the property along with additional lands to increase the estate to 230 acres. They promptly tore down the house and began construction on a new summer residence, one befitting the area in 1901. Mr. Paterson worked with architect Robert Henderson Robertson to design the castle-like Elizabethan manor complete with towers, turrets and gargoyles. The family took up residence in 1902 and named the estate Blantyre.

English-style furniture filled the main house. The Patersons lived at the estate in the summer and fall and hosted lavish dinner dances and grand garden parties. Their lifestyle continued for many years until Robert Paterson passed away in 1917. Soon the house became too much for Marie. She attempted to sell their home for one million dollars but only received an offer of \$250,000, which she promptly rejected. Sadly, the economy continued to decline. After several more



HOTEL

years Marie could no longer afford or take care of the enormous property. She was forced to settle for an offer of \$25,000 in the 1930s.

The estate was passed from owner to owner over the next 60 years, but in 1980 it was given new life when Jack and Jane Fitzpatrick purchased the property for their daughter Ann Fitzpatrick Brown. The couple restored the house to its former grandeur and opened Blantyre to the public in 1981 as a premium hotel with the hopes that visitors could stay and experience life as it was during the gilded age. In 1984 Blantyre became the first United States hotel included in Relais & Châteaux, an association of individually owned and operated luxury hotels and restaurants. In the year 2000 Ann and her staff began a five-year project to winterize Blantyre, which opened in May 2005 as a year-round resort with a decadent spa built in the converted “potting shed.”

THE BLANTYRE TODAY

Linda Law purchased the property in 2016. She upgraded the estate with what she considered “a bow to the old and a nod to the new.” In 2018 the Relais & Châteaux Forbes Five-Star resort, Blantyre, added several new amenities and offerings for guests.

Today visitors can enjoy private tastings in the Dom Pérignon Champagne Salon with specialty vintages and delicious bites from a well-paired menu. La Cave, hidden underneath the manor, boasts an internationally acclaimed wine selection with 8,000 bottles, including numerous premier and rare bottles. The concealed space with original brick and marble stone walls create the feeling of a speakeasy. Secret passwords and knocks are a customary practice for parties at La Cave.

The resort offers 24 guest rooms, each unique and special in its own way. The second floor of the original manor house boasts eight accommodations, the carriage house rooms offer stunning loft spaces with private terraces and guests traveling with family may prefer one of the more spacious cottages with outdoor patios.

The custom-designed bar from Milan, Italy, sits in the backdrop of the elegantly designed bar section of the hotel’s restaurant The Conservatory. Photos of celebrities from Linda Law’s art collection line the wall behind the bar, and outdoor seating on the patio is available when the weather is favorable. The more formal section of The Conservatory with its vaulted ceiling, stained-glass windows and exquisite chandeliers, provides the perfect setting for Chef Jeremy Berlin’s farm-to-table dishes that are prepared with locally sourced ingredients.

The new spa area features five treatment rooms, a sauna, a steam room, a fitness center and an outdoor pool. The seasonal poolside café H2O boasts casual cuisine and cocktails.

Activities abound on the property. A local naturalist escorts guests on guided trips along the estate trails, and maps are available for those that would like to explore on their own. Guests can enjoy a game of tennis, badminton or croquet. Those looking for a bit of relaxation can lounge on one of the Adirondack chairs or in the estate hammock. Be sure to enjoy a glass of sherry or port as Karèn Tchougourian plays classical music on the 1892 Steinway piano each evening beginning at 6:30 p.m. during the summer months and through October.

A DELIGHTFUL EXPERIENCE

When Gina and I arrived at Blantyre, we were greeted at the door by David Pupo, the concierge and membership director. He welcomed us by name and offered us a glass of champagne. Staff members placed our



bags in our room while we toured the property. David knows all the stories and offers a wealth of information regarding the estate and the area.

We stayed in the master suite where the hand-carved molding, magnificent crystal light fixtures and wood-burning fireplace complement the luxurious furnishings. Massive bay windows expose the enormous lawns that extend out into the forest. The separate sitting room with a pull-out couch provided private space for each of us. One afternoon while sitting at the exquisite desk next to the window, I pictured a typical garden party. Men were dressed in solid white as they played croquet, and women milled about with umbrellas sipping on glasses of bubbly. The children ran to and fro, and I could almost hear the laughter in the air.

One afternoon we joined a culinary class, offered on the weekends during the summer season, with the chef. He provided prepared ingredients to create a salad from his menu. Five guests attended the course. We laughed and got to know one another as we used tweezer-like imple-



ments to design our dish. Once finished, we moved to a small room in La Cave and dined on our creations with a delicious wine from the cellar. During the off season, mixology classes and wine tastings are part of the weekend program available to guests.

The spa at Blantyre is glorious. We arrived early for our massages and lounged in the relaxation room while gazing out at the estate gardens. This tranquil space is the perfect place to prepare for a spa treatment or to revel in the peaceful atmosphere afterward. Gina indulged in the Swedish massage, and I opted for the deep tissue treatment. The masseuses were well trained, and we left feeling relaxed and rejuvenated.

THE BERKSHIRES

The downtown area on Church Street in Lenox has several quaint shops, and Alta restaurant serves delicious cuisine. We ordered several mouth-watering items off the menu at Alta. The region is full of stunning estate homes, including The Mount, the home of famous American author Edith Wharton.

Treat yourself to an escape to Blantyre where you can step back in time and bask in the luxuries of days gone by. This estate is sumptuous, the service is impeccable and the experience will leave you with fond memories for years to come. ♦

