

## THE WHITE HOUSE – MILFORD ON SEA

The White House was built by Mr. and Mrs Walker Munro whose wealth came from the Walker side of the family which had become rich through coal.

Before being Nationalised the coal mines in Eastwood, Nottinghamshire, were originally owned by the Barber and Walker families. [BARBER WALKER & COMPANY, Colliery Proprietors, Eastwood]

There have been various buildings on the site of the present Rhinefield House since the time of William the Conqueror and in 1877, many of the Crown Lands were “privatised” and Rhinefield passed to the Walker family.

In 1885 the only daughter of the Walker family became engaged to Lieutenant Munro RN, and her father’s engagement present was £250,000 [*approx. £30M today*] with which to build a family home at Rhinefield

The original house at Rhinefield was pulled down to make way for construction of the present property and after their marriage in 1887 the couple adopted the name Walker-Munro and supervised the construction of an impressive countryseat comprising the Great House, a hunting lodge, stables, gardener’s bothy and a gate lodge.

Reputedly building Rhinefield House did not use up all of the money, and they purchased about 6 acres of land from the Cornwallis West estate and in 1903 built a ‘modest seaside summer residence’.



It was described as a "Modest Beach Hut" standing in six acres, completed in 1903, literally within a stone's throw of Milford beach.

The house has a nautical theme being in the shape of the bridge of an ocean liner with a galleon weather vane, ships bridge, a room at the top with stunning views, porthole windows and a lighthouse turret housing a staircase.

There were his and hers changing pavilions at the seaward end of colonnades enclosing the courtyard and a dinghy hanging in davits over the wall.

The Walker Munros only stayed there for one month each year apparently with all 45 of their servants.

Lieutenant Commander Walker-Munro died in 1923 and his wife in 1934. The estate passed to their son, Major Walker Munro, who had emigrated to Kenya, and he sold The White House in 1938.

The purchasers were Middlesex County Council who, at first, used it as a convalescent home for women tuberculosis patients.

At the outbreak of WWII, the house was requisitioned for military use and after the war it reopened for male TB sufferers and the NHS took it over in 1948. Three years later it became one of the first hospitals to cater specifically for child TB sufferers.

From 1963, with TB virtually eradicated, it became a school for those with special needs before falling into disuse by 1983 as it was too expensive to upkeep. Squatters and drug addicts moved in, vandalizing and removing the tiles and generally leaving it in a sorry state.

Although several schemes for redevelopment were proposed, no work was undertaken and the buildings fell into severe disrepair and there are newspaper reports from 1993 about the possible demolition of the White House.

The site was bought by Colten Developments Ltd. in 1997, for £950K, and the house converted into 14 apartments in the old house with 2 lodges and 2 separate bungalows on the seafront.