



For sale: UK's most romantic B&B (with dalek)

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Sally Williams, Western Mail

IT'S dusk and you are making your way up the spiral staircase, past the Dalek, to the top of the West Usk Lighthouse, near Newport.

At the top, from where you are sitting - in a bubbling hot tub, sipping a glass of wine - you can just about make out the lights of the seaside resorts of Clevedon and Weston-super-Mare across the Bristol Channel.

From this bird's eye view, you can see headlights approaching. It is a Rolls Royce, coming to pick you up and take you to your chosen restaurant.

There are not many properties in Wales where you can do this. So it's no wonder that estate agents were left scratching their heads when West Usk Lighthouse came on to the property market.

It is perhaps the most unusual B&B around.

The former lighthouse sits at the end of a long, bumpy track, at the junction of the Severn and Usk estuaries.

It is also an unusual example of its kind, and built to a unique design. It's not as tall as most lighthouses but, at 50 feet wide, it has a considerably longer circumference and offers more spacious accommodation than usual too.

Oh, and as we reported yesterday, if you buy the lighthouse - for just under a cool £1m - you get the Rolls Royce and one of only three original Daleks from Doctor Who thrown in.

Owner Frank Sheanan and his wife Danielle bought the lighthouse in 1987 but are selling up because they want to emigrate.

Mr Sheanan said, "Back then we were both living and working in London but wanted to get out of the rat race.

"Danielle saw an advert for the lighthouse, in Exchange & Mart of all places. It was derelict, and had sheep and cows in it, but we could see its potential and realised it was our ticket out.

"There are some very positive images associated with lighthouses, they conjure up romantic notions and the idea of saving lives - that's why I think people love them so much.

"When you feel stressed out from working in a city, you can really see yourself wishing you were a lighthouse keeper, living somewhere isolated by the water.

"As lighthouses go, we are very fortunate.

"The rooftop garden provides a lovely observation point - you can see parts of England 17 miles away.

The Dalek took up residence by coincidence but ended up saving Frank and Danielle's "little Welsh universe" by pitting itself against a civil servant who had plans for a section of the M4 to pass over the lighthouse.

As Frank explained, "An HM Government officer came at our door one day, in the John Redwood era of the Conservative government, saying she wanted to talk about plans for 'the road', when a guest told me he had a Dalek that could 'blast them'.

"He said we could have his authentic Dalek because his five-year-old daughter was frightened of it.

"So for just three nights' bed and breakfast in return - which I thought was very reasonable - the Dalek helped us get a high-profile publicity campaign under way and the road plan was eventually scrapped.

"The Dalek is staying on to protect the lighthouse," he said.

Named as one of the Most Romantic B&Bs in Britain by Cosmopolitan magazine, the lighthouse has a room with a king-sized water bed, another with a four-poster and a smaller room too.

Frank recalls it has been the scene of a number of true romances.

He said, "One American guy flew here, booked all the rooms and proposed to his girlfriend at the top of the lighthouse, in the lamp room - thank God she said 'yes'.

"On another occasion, a young American woman booked in, just as a big submarine was coming in to Newport harbour.

"It turned out she had flown to Wales to meet her boyfriend without her husband knowing.

"I saw her waving goodbye to her boyfriend out to sea, him on the submarine, her at the top of the lighthouse in the lamp room - it was a powerful image.

"But then her husband rang up, asking if she was with anyone.

"I didn't want to drop her in it and he sounded a bit of a wally so I said she wasn't, because she was alone at that time so I wasn't lying.

"Maybe they got together in the end. I hope so."

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Spend a night with a light

West Usk lighthouse may be up for sale, but there are at least two others in Wales where you can spend the night.

Nash Point Lighthouse, Vale of Glamorgan

The 37m lighthouse was automated in 1998 and the keepers' cottages are open for self-catering holidays. Nash Point is on the Vale of Glamorgan Heritage Coast with safe sandy beaches close by.

The Old Lighthouse at St Ann's Head, Milford Haven

High on a cliff at the entrance to Milford Haven harbour, the Old Lighthouse holiday apartment is in the former coastguard buildings at the foot of the 17th century tower. The owners live in the main part of the lighthouse and offer bed and breakfast.

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