



Lady Mond of Belle-Île-en-Terre

Elaine. So Elizabeth what was it about Lady Mond that you found so interesting?

Elizabeth. Well Lady Mond's life is an amazing and fabulous story. First, she lived here in Belle-Île-en-Terre until she was sixteen, seventeen. And then she decided to go to Paris on her own and there she created great sensation because she was a very beautiful girl. Later she become extremely rich and had high life, glamour, etc.

Elaine. How did she become so rich?

Elizabeth. She met rich people, she met artists, she met as well her first husband and she met as well a Prince and made a romance during 5 or 6 years with him. Then later on she met Robert Mond.

Elaine. So where did she meet Robert?

Elizabeth. She met Robert in England in fact because she was well integrated in London and that completely change her life because Robert Mond was an Egyptologist, he was an industrialist and he was a world known chemist, called as well the King of Nickel, you know. So, imagine, Robert Mond gave her a tiara that belonged to Napoleon's wife and it has one thousand and forty diamonds. So, imagine, its a long way from the time Mai was barefooted in a water mill. Her name was first, I must say that her name was Marie-Louise Le Manac'h but called Mai and she had five brothers. Her parents lived and worked in a water mill and it was a very modest life, um, they had just a few hens, a cow and that's all you know, but Mai was in charge of the animals. She spoke Breton all the time and she learned French when she went to school.

Elaine OK so she was sixteen as we said before, when she went to Paris.

Elizabeth. Exactly. She went to Paris in May 1885 because the owners of the water mill invited her for two days in Paris for the burial of Victor Hugo and there she discovered another world and she really... she realised that Paris was a place full of promises and I do think it's the turning point of her life because three years later she went alone to Paris and her life changed completely.

Elaine. She had to learn table manners.

Elizabeth. Yes, of course.

Elaine. And dress properly.

Elizabeth. Exactly, absolutely.

Elaine. Because she aspired to mix with very rich gentlemen.

Elizabeth. Exactly. Yes.

Elaine. And so she met, I think we might have said this, but she met Robert Mond in London wasn't it?

Elizabeth. In London CONBANK??? exactly because she used to go to parties, to dinners and she was already a fashionable lady and she knew a lot of people, she met Robert, her life changed as well.

Elaine. How old were they when they met?

Elizabeth. She was forty then, but they didn't married before she was fifty-three.

Elaine. That's interesting isn't it.

Elizabeth. Yes and he was fifty-five.

Elaine. And he had two daughters, I believe.

Elizabeth. He had two daughters as well. He was a widower and she was a widow.

Elaine. And so when did actually Coat an Noz, where we're sitting now, come into the story?

Elizabeth. For Marie's 60, Robert Mond bought quite an enormous castle in the huge Forest and it is situated between Belle-Île-en-Terre and Plougonver, and what is amazing, again, is that Marie used to go to the castle quite enormous when she was very young and she put eggs, milk or butter to the Princes who lived here but of course she saw rich people moving around and particularly sons of the owners but it was another world and she just could dream.

Elaine. Amazing isn't it that, uh...? She couldn't imagine, perhaps ever, that she would be living in that.... this extraordinary castle.

Elizabeth. Well, fifty years later she realised her dream and she became the owner of the castle.

Elaine. And I believe she also had other properties in Belle-Île-en-Terre.

Elizabeth. Of course, she had properties in Belle-Île-en-Terre. Farms, flats, manors, castles, either in Dinard, Paris, London. She was extremely rich.

Elaine. But she left quite a legacy, didn't she, actually in the town, in Belle-Île in terms of buildings.

Elizabeth. In fact, yes. Obviously she made many donations for her town and as well she became a generous lady helping poor people, schools, children, etc.

Elaine. So, when did she die and where is she buried?

Elizabeth. Lady Mond died in her new castle in Belle-Île-en-Terre and she was bu... she is buried in Belle-Île-en-Terre cemetery at Locmaria and her mausoleum is amazing as well. Inspiring.....inspired by Britain in Egyptian culture. There's a chapel and underneath a crypt.

Elaine. So what is the current situation with the castle today and how can people visit all these special places?

Elizabeth. Well after Lady Mond's death Coat an Noz castle was bought by several owners and, as well, often ransacked. But now a new life is beginning for this castle. About five years ago, Mr and Mrs Moreau, two passionated persons bought it and they open it during the Journées de Patrimoine. You know a writer said about Lady Mond's life " it is a true fairy tale " and I want to say that in fact its a life of someone who went from shadow to spotlight...and I want to say to people come to Belle-Ile-en-Terre and walk in the trace of that fabulous lady.

