

## The History of The Lords of the Manor

The History of the Lords of the Manor begins in Liverpool England, where Edward Oates, son of William Edward Oates & Ann Colister, formally from the Isle of Man, was born, on the 13/01/1841. When Edward was 9 years old, he & his family immigrated to the new colony of Natal. His parents were allocated land near Richmond, but chose to settle at Town Hill in Pietermaritzburg. This property today is part of Cordwalles School, established in 1912. Edward Oates was educated in Pietermaritzburg and subsequently served an apprenticeship as a bricklayer. However he chose to become a transport rider, moving goods between Heilbron in The Republic of Orange River, The Transvaal Republic and the Colony of Natal. He married Elizabeth Evans in 1862, formally of Lhanddinam, Wales and lived on a farm near Heilbron with their family of eight children. He must have been very successful as a transport rider as he purchased land in both the old Republic of Orange River and Weenen in the highlands area and between Mooi River and Escourt. He purchased 1000 acres of land which he named Oatesdale. In 1896 Edward was commissioned to build the Weenen Country Girls School on Oatesdale. Construction commenced the same year, but was only completed after the Anglo Boer War in 1902. During the period 1896 to 1899 Edward was joined by his son Ted who, together with one labourer, dressed granite available on the farm and began the arduous task of building. The walls were 18 inches thick and a six foot patterned granite floor was laid around the building. The building had a total of 39 rooms, fireplace surrounds were carved from local thorn wood and roof trusses constructed from rolled steel. The double story building is said to have had a passages wide enough to allow an ox wagon through, in order to get building material to the top floor. The building was occupied as a girl's school until 1914. It was then taken over by Edward's eldest son, William Edward (Ted) Oates as the family home, which it remained until 1916. It has survived the ravages of wars, the rigours of a boarding school and the boisterous behaviour of a large family. It has been a guest house at various times, it has been altered and changed and pushed and pulled from an institution, to hospitality trade, from Colonial design to Swiss décor. By the year 2007 it was tired and in need of an enormous amount of tender loving care. It was also for sale. Sometimes the Gods smile generously on the most unsuspecting situations. Two intrepid businessmen from Durban heard of the sale and decided, on the off chance that it would become a worthwhile investment in the lucrative hospitality trade, to come and investigate Oatesdale House. They immediately saw the undoubted potential. It would be restored back to its Colonial Victorian Splendour. They acquired the skills of a specialist stonemason and restorer of graded buildings in England. They sought out an exclusive interior designer specializing in colonial refurbishing and so began the task of restoring this magnificent monument to its original splendour. The name change to Lords of the Manor, it was felt, would reflect the history of Kwazulu Natal and the links to the United Kingdom, by those who had settled here. The task now is to ensure all the guests who visit Lords of the Manor are not only impressed by its aesthetic splendour, but leave with the feeling that they have enjoyed hospitality commensurate of a Manor House.