

Mandrake

BY TIM WALKER

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Tresanton Mk II

SOME SPLENDID news for those of us who admired what Olga Polizzi did for the Hotel Tresanton, her magnificent establishment at St Mawes in Cornwall, where the Prince of Wales has stayed and Tony Blair has dined. I am told that Olga, the sister of Sir Rocco Forte, is close to finalising the purchase of the Grade I listed Regency estate of Endsleigh in the neighbouring county of Devon and has bold plans to turn it into one of the greatest country hotels in the land.

The famed 14-bedroom Endsleigh House, built for the 6th Duke of Bedford, boasts a breathtaking landscape by the 19th century designer Humphrey Repton. It has 108 acres of arboretum, woodland gardens, grottos, ponds, formal gardens, plus stabling and cot-



Olga Polizzi has a new project

tages and 856 yards on both banks of the lovely River Tamar for some of the best trout and salmon fishing in the country. The National Trust bizarrely passed on the opportunity to buy it from its present owners – a local trust which simply cannot afford its upkeep – for a third of its nominal market value of £3.25 million.

Olga is modest about her flair for turning grand old houses into great hotels, but one of her staff at the Tresanton put it rather well when I inquired how many stars it had. “Oh, we consider ourselves above all that nonsense,” she said imperiously. Olga, for her part, would say only: “It’s not a done deal, but it is fair to say that I am interested. Obviously it has huge potential.”

The agents are saying that the place is as good as sold, but then, of course, they always do.