

= The Dorchester =

The Dorchester is a five @-@ star luxury hotel on Park Lane and Deanery Street , London , to the east of Hyde Park . It is one of the world 's most prestigious and expensive hotels . The Dorchester opened on 18 April 1931 , and still retains its 1930s furnishings and ambiance despite being modernised .

Throughout its history the hotel has been closely associated with the rich and famous . During the 1930s it became known as a haunt of numerous writers and artists such as poet Cecil Day @-@ Lewis , novelist Somerset Maugham , and the painter Sir Alfred Munnings . It held prestigious literary gatherings , notably the " Foyles Literary Luncheons " , an event the hotel still hosts today . During the Second World War , the strength of its construction gave the hotel the reputation of being one of London 's safest buildings , and a host of political and military luminaries chose it as their London residence . Queen Elizabeth II attended the Dorchester when she was a princess on the day prior to the announcement of her engagement to the Prince Philip , Duke of Edinburgh on 10 July 1947 . The hotel has since become particularly popular with film actors , models and rock stars , and Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton frequently stayed at the hotel throughout the 1960s and 1970s . The hotel became a Grade II Listed Building in January 1981 , and was subsequently purchased by the Sultan of Brunei in 1985 . It belongs to the Dorchester Collection , which in turn is owned by the Brunei Investment Agency (BIA) , an arm of the Ministry of Finance of Brunei .

In the 1950s , theatrical designer Oliver Messel made a number of notable changes to the interior of the hotel , incorporating aspects of theatrical design into the hotel interior . He designed the lavish apartments on the 7th and 8th floors ; the Oliver Messel Suite is named after him , designed in the Georgian country house style . Between 1988 and 1990 , the hotel was completely renovated by Bob Lush of the Richmond Design Group at a cost of US \$ 100 million .

Today The Dorchester has five restaurants : The Grill , Alain Ducasse , The Spatisserie , The Promenade , and China Tang . Alain Ducasse 's restaurant is one of the UK 's four 3 @-@ Michelin @-@ starred restaurants . Afternoon tea , a tradition which has taken place at the hotel since its opening in 1931 , is served every day of the week at five in the afternoon in The Promenade and the Spatisserie . Harry Craddock , one of the world 's most famous barmen of the 1930s , invented the " Dorchester of London " cocktail here at the Dorchester Bar . A well @-@ lit plane tree stands at the edge of the hotel in the front garden , and was named one of the " Great Trees of London " by the London Tree Forum and Countryside Commission in 1997 .

= = History = =

= = Background = = =

The site was originally part of the Manor of Hyde , which was given to William the Conqueror by Geoffrey de Mandeville . Joseph Damer acquired it in the 18th century and a large building was constructed in 1751 . It was named Dorchester House in 1792 after Damer became the Earl of Dorchester . In the early 19th century it became the Hertford House after it was purchased by Francis Seymour @-@ Conway , the 3rd Marquess of Hertford , and alterations were made to it , inspired by the Villa Farnese of Rome . Following the death of Hertford , it was converted into a mansion by Captain Robert Stayner Holford .

The background to the development of the Dorchester Hotel is complicated . Sir Malcolm McAlpine , a partner in the building company , Sir Robert McAlpine & Sons , and Sir Frances Towle , the managing director of Gordon Hotels Ltd . , shared a vision of creating the ? perfect hotel ? : ultramodern and ultra @-@ efficient , with all the conveniences modern technology could supply . The two companies purchased Hertford House in 1929 and quickly demolished it . The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) had also shown an interest in purchasing it and had almost done so prior to the McAlpine acquisition , but instead they turned their attention to Foley House . The purchase and destruction of Hertford House was part of significant redevelopment which took place

on Park Lane during this period ; it followed the gutting of Grosvenor House and the building of the Grosvenor Hotel , which was completed in 1929 .

= = = Construction = = =

Sir Owen Williams was commissioned to design the new hotel , using reinforced concrete to allow the creation of large internal spaces without support pillars , but he abandoned the project in February 1930 and was replaced with William Curtis Green . James Maude Richards , hired by Williams , served as an architectural assistant within the all @-@ engineer staff . Percy Morley Horder , consulting architect to Gordon 's Hotels , had not been consulted during the design process and , after seeing the plan , resigned from the project , remarking to The Observer that the design was ill @-@ suited for the location , assuming the concrete was to be left unpainted and that the insulation would be minimal . Some 40 @,@ 000 tonnes of earth were excavated to make room for the hotel 's extensive basement which is one @-@ third of the size of the hotel above the surface . The upper eight floors were erected in just 10 weeks , supported on a massive 3 feet (0 @.@ 91 m) thick reinforced concrete deck that forms the roof of the first floor . With the development of the Dorchester , concerns were raised that Park Lane would soon become New York City 's Fifth Avenue .

= = = 1931 ? 1945 = = =

The new Dorchester Hotel was feted with a grand opening on 18 April (21 April also cited) 1931 by Lady Violet Astor . The Dorchester quickly gained reputation as a luxury hotel . During the 1930s it became known as a haunt of numerous writers and artists such as poet Cecil Day @-@ Lewis , novelist Somerset Maugham , and the painter Sir Alfred Munnings . There were prestigious literary gatherings , including " Foyles Literary Luncheons " , an event the hotel still hosts . Shortly after the opening , Sir Percival David , a leading admirer of Chinese porcelain , moved his growing collection from the Mayfair Hotel to the Dorchester , where he kept it in his suites for many years . Danny Kaye began appearing in cabaret at the hotel in the 1930s , initially earning £ 50 a week . Many blues and jazz artists appeared at the hotel , including Alberta Hunter and the Jack Jackson Orchestra . In 1934 , Hunter and her orchestra recorded Noël Coward 's " I Travel Alone " and Cole Porter 's " Miss Ortis Regrets " at the hotel ; both Coward and Porter were fans . It also became a rendezvous for many businessmen ; it was at the Dorchester that British Petroleum formed a joint Collaborate Committee with ICI in 1943 .

During the Second World War , the strength of its construction gave the hotel the reputation of being one of London 's safest buildings . On its opening , Sir Malcolm McAlpine declared it to be " bomb @-@ proof , earthquake @-@ proof and fireproof , " and the only damage inflicted on the building by the Luftwaffe during the war was several broken windows . Some felt the communal air @-@ raid shelter in the basement to be insufficiently exclusive and retreated to the hotel 's underground gymnasium and Turkish baths , which had been converted into a shelter by Victor Cazalet . Its wartime clientele included such political and military luminaries as Lord Halifax (Foreign Minister) , Oliver Stanley (Minister for War) , Air Chief Marshal Sir Charles Portal (Chief of the Air Staff) , Duff Cooper (with his wife Lady Diana Cooper) , Oliver Lyttleton (President of the Board of Trade) and Duncan Sandys (Financial Secretary to the War Office) . Halifax and his wife took eight rooms as well as a chapel in the hotel , and when possible he enjoyed trysts with his mistress , Alexandra " Baba " Metcalfe , who was also staying in the hotel and concurrently having an affair with Dino Grandi , Mussolini 's representative in London . General Dwight D. Eisenhower took a suite on the first floor (now the Eisenhower Suite) in 1942 after having previously stayed at Claridge 's and in 1944 made it his headquarters ; Kay Summersby , his chauffeur and purported mistress , and Roosevelt 's representative Averell Harriman also stayed there thanks to its reputation as a safe haven . During a dinner party which Harriman attended in the Dorchester , the bombing was so intense that guests came down to join him there as it was safer than in the upper @-@ floor rooms . Bostonian Sherry Mangan of Time was one of several American correspondents

who stayed at the hotel during the war , meeting the Trotskyist Sam Gordon in 1944 who asked if the Dorchester was safe from air raids , to which Mangan assured him that " every fifth columnist in London is staying here " . Other of the hotel 's guests reflected the directors ' wide @-@ ranging political beliefs : it was at once the base for the Zionist movement 's leaders , including Chaim Weizmann , as well as a group of upper @-@ class British anti @-@ Semites , including Margaret Greville . According to Cecil Beaton the clientele was a " mixed brew " ; to its wartime chronicler , it was " a building in which the respectable and the dubious mixed by the thousand , knocking back cocktails and indulging in careless talk " . In March 1945 , Ernest Hemingway and Time correspondent and lover Mary Welsh stayed at the Dorchester , where they were entertained by Emerald , Lady Cunard , who had a three @-@ room suite on the seventh floor .

= = = Post @-@ war = = =

In 1949 , the 150th anniversary of Alexander Pushkin 's birth was organized at the hotel by the Society of Cultural Relations with the USSR , attended by the Soviet chargé d 'affaires , the Polish ambassador , the Romanian minister , and Cecil Day @-@ Lewis , raising Mi5 's suspicions that he still had communist sympathies , a contention he later denounced . In the post @-@ war period , the Dorchester became one of the most popular hotels in London for actors and entertainers , and the banqueting rooms and suites became known for their press conferences and parties . Diners at the Dorchester included Cyril Connolly , T. S. Eliot , Harold Nicolson , and Edith Sitwell , with a clientele of luminaries such as Ralph Richardson , Elizabeth Taylor , Alfred Hitchcock , and Barbra Streisand . Queen Elizabeth II attended the Dorchester when she was a princess on the day prior to the announcement of her engagement to the Prince Philip , Duke of Edinburgh on 10 July 1947 . Prince Philip also held his stag night party at the hotel , which has been documented in a plaque .

When Said bin Taimur of Oman was ousted in a coup in July 1970 and replaced with his son Qaboos bin Said , he was sent in exile and lived at the Dorchester until his death in 1972 . The McAlpine family owned the hotel until 1977 when they sold it to a consortium of businessmen from the Middle East headed by the Sultan of Brunei . On 3 June 1982 , Shlomo Argov , the Israeli ambassador to the United Kingdom was shot and seriously injured in an assassination attempt as he left the Dorchester . The attack was the immediate cause for the 1982 Lebanon War .

In 1985 , the hotel was purchased by the Sultan of Brunei . The hotel is currently owned by the Dorchester Collection , which in turn is owned by the Brunei Investment Agency (BIA) , an arm of the Ministry of Finance of Brunei . The Dorchester Collection owns luxury hotels in the United Kingdom , the United States , France , Switzerland and Italy . In 1988 , the hotel closed for two years for a major refurbishment .

In June 1998 the brother of the Sultan of Brunei , Prince Jefri Bolkiah , was sued by his former business partners in a case that was settled out of court . During the case the Manoukians claimed that Prince Jefri kept 40 prostitutes at a time at the Dorchester . In 1999 , the hotel hosted the first ever Pride of Britain Awards . In March 2002 , a robbery took place in the lobby of the hotel when thieves wearing ski masks smashed the jewelry cabinets with a sledgehammer and took off with jewels . The Dorchester celebrated its 80th anniversary in 2011 . To mark the event , the charity ? Trees for Cities ? planted eighty ? future great trees ? around the capital .

= = Architecture = =

= = = Exterior = = =

The architectural style adopted by William Curtis Green , largely based on Owen William 's design , was a departure from the Neoclassical with its reinforced concrete covered over with terrazzo slabs . British Modernists were disappointed with the result , describing Green 's adaptation as , " a genteel period piece which looks the compromise it is " . In comparison to some of the other hotels in London such as the Lanesborough , the building 's exterior is unremarkable . It is eight storeys high

aside from the ground floor , with the central bay containing three windows on each floor . Christopher Matthew has stated that he thinks of the Dorchester as a " rather American hotel " , not only because of the strong association with American actors such as Elizabeth Taylor , but because the sweeping 1930s facade reminded him of many of those which appeared in American film musicals . However , he notes that the hotel still remains " very much an English hotel " . The hotel became a Grade II Listed Building in January 1981 .

= = = Interior = = =

The interior displays a " subtle amalgam of styles " , testament to the number of different designers involved over the years , including William Curtis Green , Oliver Ford , Alberto Pinto and Oliver Messel . Green designed the original interior which is still retained in part . Kim Einhorn believes that this fusion of style was achieved tastefully and has remarked that the Dorchester Hotel is " a good example of somewhere it may be better to add decor rather than completely re @-@ invent " . DK Eyewitness describes the Dorchester as " the epitome of the glamorous luxury hotel , with an outrageously lavish lobby and a star @-@ studded history " . Rooms include the Grill Room , the Ballroom , the Gold Room , the Crush Hall , the (former) Oriental Restaurant , and the Dorchester Bar . The Ballroom was built to accommodate some 1 @,@ 000 guests . Thomas Prebensen Steen , in his book Remarkable hotels of Europe , describes the doors of the hotel , " Effectively set off by the ivory walls between the pilasters behind the row of Corinthian columns , the doorways are easily recognised as decorative masterpieces in their own right : dominated by stuccoed , classic pediments decorated with friezes and gilded details , these impressive portals , with either double or single , richly panelled Georgian mahogany doors , make a regal link between the Promenade and Dorchester 's renowned , stunning banqueting rooms . " Gold leaf and marble remain distinct features of the public rooms of the hotel , including the restaurants , with features more reminiscent of an English country house than a hotel . Considerable efforts to make the rooms soundproof at the Dorchester were made from the outset ; the exterior walls were faced with cork , and the floors and ceilings of the bedrooms and suites were lined with compressed seaweed . Following renovation , the hotel was fitted with double glazing , and triple glazing on the Park Lane side to further improve soundproofing .

In the 1950s , theatrical designer Oliver Messel made a number of notable changes to the interior of the hotel . He incorporated aspects of theatrical design into the hotel interior , and designed the lavish apartments on the 7th and 8th floors . As Country Life documented , Messel 's rooms at the hotel " represents a rare glimpse into the world of mid @-@ 20th @-@ century interior design " , in which he drew upon his skills as a theatre designer to fill his rooms with " tricks of space and light , colour and period reference " . Today one of the suites is named after him , the Oliver Messel Suite . This suite displays a remarkable Georgian country house ambiance . Messel made the changes on the Deanery Side of the building in 1952 / 3 . Oliver Frederick Ford served as consultant designer from 1962 , decorating both the Stanhope Suite and the Orchid Room , a corner of which was completely re @-@ built and decorated in the English rococo style . He also remodelled the white , gold , and green entrance hall . The current dark green staff uniform of The Dorchester was designed in 1980 and is also attributed to Ford .

Between 1988 and 1990 , the hotel was completely renovated by Bob Lush of the Richmond Design Group at a cost of \$ 100 million . The Promenade , Grill Room , and the Oliver Messel Suite were restored during the renovation . The Dorchester Spa is also designed in an Art Deco style , featuring , as Steen puts it , " elegant statues , engraved panels after René Lalique , blond maple woodwork , and a decorative pond with a group of small bronze foundations formed as water lilies producing gentle sounds of waterfall " . Liberace 's piano sits in the lobby .

As of 2012 , the Dorchester has 250 rooms and 49 suites . In the rooms , specially @-@ made Irish linen sheets cover the four poster beds , with cherry wood furnishings . The bath tubs , cited as " probably the deepest in London " , are made of Italian marble in the Art Deco style . All rooms in the hotel either provide views of Hyde Park or of its landscaped terraces . During the major renovation of 2002 , all rooms and suites were fitted with modern telecommunication systems . The hotel has its

own floristry team , led by designer florist Philip Hammond , who are responsible for regularly updating the flowers on display in the hotel and providing their services for weddings and special occasions .

= = = Restaurants = = =

The Dorchester has five restaurants : The Grill , Alain Ducasse , The Spatisserie , The Promenade , and China Tang , and three bars , two of which are in the last two restaurants . Employing 90 full @-@ time chefs , the hotel has long had a reputation for its cuisine , and chefs such as Jean Baptiste Virlogeux , Eugene Kaufeler , Willi Elsener and Anton Mosimann have all run restaurants there . Mosimann ran the Maitre Chef des Cuisines at the Dorchester for 13 years . Virlogeux , head chef during the Second World War , had to succumb to rationing and a national maximum @-@ price restriction of five shillings for a three @-@ course meal .

Alain Ducasse 's restaurant , Alain Ducasse at the Dorchester , holds three Michelin stars . When refurbished along with other parts of the hotel in 2007 , the redesign purposefully retained its 1940s influence . The restaurant serves contemporary French cuisine using seasonal French and British ingredients . The restaurant features a special table for up to six diners called the " Table Lumière " , lit by 4500 fibre optic lights . It is surrounded by a thin white curtain which allows diners at the table to view out into the restaurant but prevents other diners from viewing in .

The Grill restaurant , which serves British cuisine , is decorated in a Moorish theme , attributed to King Alfonso 's influence during his time in London in exile in the 1930s . The cream @-@ painted walls feature gilded gratings and mirrored arches and display a Flemish tapestry . The ceilings are ornate , featuring gold leaves and brass chandeliers , and the room also features deep red riveted leather chairs and deep red curtains , with a Middle Eastern @-@ looking exotic carpet . According to restaurant critic Jay Rayner , " when you drill down on the menu it ? s what the faded gentry used to call high tea . It ? s nursery food at stupid prices . "

The Promenade was refurbished in 1990 by Leslie Wright with a gilded ceiling and reliefs and brass lanterns , and was altered again in 2005 by Thierry Despont , who fitted it with an oval leather bar ; it forms the grand entrance and has a length which is equal to that of Nelson 's Column . Piano music is played throughout much of the day , with live jazz from 19 : 30 . Afternoon tea , a tradition which has taken place at the hotel since its opening in 1931 , is served every day of the week at five in the afternoon in the large Promenade and the Spatisserie , with guests seated in decorative upholstered sofas with low tables placed in front of them . The tables are set with elegant silver cutlery and crockery , with Corinthian columns made of marble , glittering chandeliers , French tapestries and potted plants in the background . Tea is served by waiters dressed in English @-@ style long coats . Hollywood actor Charlton Heston , a frequent guest at the hotel , once commented on the aspect of service at the hotel : ? The cooks and bakers , the clerks and porters , the maids and the flower ladies , the bell men are the hotel ? .

The choice of tea offered to the guests is diverse , and includes the hotel 's own Dorchester Blend . The service includes a first course consisting of finger sandwiches with sliced cucumber , cream cheese , and smoked salmon , all served in silver trays , a second course consisting of scones with clotted cream and jam , followed by a pastry tray with a selection of freshly @-@ made patisseries .

China Tang is owned by the businessman David Tang and was opened in 2005 . The restaurant is luxuriously designed , with an art deco lounge bar reminiscent of 1930s Shanghai . The Spatisserie is an informal restaurant , which specialises in light snacks and afternoon tea , serving cakes , biscuits and pastries .

The Dorchester Bar was initially rebuilt in 1938 and was run by Harry Craddock , one of the world 's most famous barmen of the period , known for his Martini , Manhattan and White Lady cocktails . Craddock invented the " Dorchester of London " cocktail here in the 1930s . The bar was refurbished in 1979 . It was designed by Alberto Pinto with bleached wood , Provençale blue and white ceramic picture panels , and a mirrored ceiling . As of 2012 , the bar is curved and is furnished with rich " blacks , browns and aubergine ? combined with lacquered mahogany , mirrored glass and velvet " . In the evenings , jazz is played in the bar . As of 2002 , the Dorchester had 460 different wines in

stock .

= = = Grounds = = =

A plane tree , with its monumental root system , stands at the edge of the hotel in the well @-@ tended front garden . The branches of the tree are fitted with numerous bulbs which makes the night scene of the hotel evocative . Named one of the " Great Trees of London " by the London Tree Forum and Countryside Commission in 1997 , it featured in a BBC programme Meetings with Remarkable Trees in 2000 .

= = Entertainment = =

The hotel has continued to be associated with actors , rock stars and people in entertainment . Numerous film actors and people have auditioned , been interviewed or have stayed at the Dorchester over the years , and it is strongly associated with cinema , particularly American film . From the 1940s onwards the Dorchester was a common rendezvous for film producers , actors and casting agents . In 1940 , Gabriel Pascal and David Lean used Pascal 's hotel suite as the casting location for the movie Major Barbara ; Deborah Kerr , who auditioned for the film , said of it : " How bizarre it was . This room full of chaps smoking enormous cigars and drinking martinis and this young girl reciting the Lords ' Prayer . " In the 1940s , producer Earl St. John was found drunk at the hotel ; writer and co @-@ producer Eric Ambler promptly sent him back to John Davis in a taxi with a board around his neck with the words " Return to John Davis with compliments " . Ray Bradbury stayed at the hotel during the filming of Moby Dick (1956) . In 1964 , John Lennon was invited to attend one of the Foyle Literary Luncheons after he received acclaim for his book In His Own Write . John and Cynthia had not realised the notability of the event and attended with a hangover , with Lennon disappointing the crowd which had gathered at the Dorchester who were expecting a speech , simply muttering " Thank you very much , it 's been a pleasure " . Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor were regulars at the hotel throughout the 1960s and 1970s and spent their honeymoon in the Oliver Messel suite in March 1964 . Burton was interviewed in his suite while promoting The Wild Geese in 1978 .

The hotel has also hosted many footballers attending the F.A. Cup Finals over the years , and in 1961 Leicester City players checked in before playing Tottenham Hotspur . Taylor and Burton were staying there at the time . In 1972 , Raquel Welch visited Stamford Bridge and invited the Chelsea Football Club team back to a cocktail party at the Dorchester , which was also attended by the Rolling Stones . In 2003 , Ken Bates agreed to sell Chelsea Football Club to Roman Abramovich after they met for 20 minutes at the hotel . On 28 August 2007 , an honorary dinner for Nelson Mandela was held at the Dorchester on the eve of the unveiling of his statue on Parliament Square . It was also at a Dorchester suite that actor Christian Bale was alleged to have assaulted his mother and sister shortly before The Dark Knight premiere in July 2008 and was subsequently arrested . In 2014 numerous celebrities started boycotting the hotel due to its links to the introduction of Sharia Law in Brunei , which most famously includes the death penalty for homosexuality .