

= Royal Albion Hotel =

The Royal Albion Hotel (originally the Albion Hotel) is a 3 @-@ star hotel in the seaside resort of Brighton , part of the English city of Brighton and Hove . Built on the site of a house belonging to Richard Russell , a local doctor whose advocacy of sea @-@ bathing and seawater drinking helped to make Brighton fashionable in the 18th century , it has been extended several times , although it experienced a period of rundown and closure in the early 20th century . A fire in 1998 caused serious damage , but the hotel was restored .

The Classical @-@ style building is in three parts of different sizes and dates but similar appearances . Large pilasters and columns of various orders feature prominently . Amon Henry Wilds , an important and prolific local architect , took the original commission on behalf of promoter John Colbatch . Another local entrepreneur , Harry Preston , restored the hotel to its former high status after buying it in poor condition . The building took on its present three @-@ wing form in 1963 . The original part of the building was listed at Grade II * by English Heritage for its architectural and historical importance , and its western extension is listed separately at the lower Grade II .

= = History = =

= = = Beginnings = = =

The site itself is connected with the life and career of Richard Russell , a doctor who advocated sea water as a cure of ailments . After Russell 's death in 1759 , Old Steine developed as the centre of fashionable life in Brighton . Russell House , as it became known , was used as lodgings for visitors such as the Duke of Cumberland , and later became an entertainment venue with activities such as a puppet theatre , a camera obscura and resident jugglers .

In the 1820s , it passed to entrepreneur John Colbatch , who demolished it in 1823 . The local authorities tried to arrange for the land to be kept as open space , but negotiations collapsed and Colbatch began planning the construction of a hotel .

= = = Construction , success , disrepair = = =

Colbatch commissioned young architect Amon Henry Wilds , who began planning the hotel in 1822 . Wilds , the son of Amon Wilds and an associate of Charles Busby , had been responsible for many building schemes in Brighton from about 1815 , when he and his father moved their architectural practice to Brighton . Schemes already completed by 1822 included King 's Road and Brighton Unitarian Church . The hotel was built on a corner site at the point where Old Steine met King 's Road , and like Russell House the main façade faced away from the sea , towards Old Steine . The four @-@ storey structure opened on 5 August 1826 .

The venture was immediately successful , and a stylistically similar five @-@ storey extension was added to the west in about 1847 . At the same time , the name was changed from the Albion Hotel . Six years earlier , one of Brighton 's most important cultural establishments was established in a ground @-@ floor room : the Albion Rooms Literary and Scientific Institution combined the functions of library , lecture theatre and museum . The venture eventually became unsustainable , and the institution 's members presented the accumulated books , artefacts and pictures to Brighton Corporation , the local authority . This led to the establishment of the Brighton Museum and Art Gallery and Brighton Library in the grounds of the Royal Pavilion .

The hotel fell into disrepair in the late 19th century , and was closed in 1900 . Harry Preston , owner of the nearby Royal York Hotel , bought it in 1913 for £ 13 @, @ 500 (£ 1 @, @ 198 @, @ 000 in 2016) , and quickly restored its fashionable reputation . The building was completely refurbished , additions were made , and well @-@ known literary figures , artists and entertainers regularly stayed . The extensions carried out around this time , in the Edwardian style typical of the period ,

included a sea @-@ facing lounge at the rear of the hotel , and were carried out by Brighton architectural firm Clayton & Black . Started in the 1870s by Charles Clayton and Ernest Black and continued by their sons , this firm was one of Brighton 's most prolific designers of public buildings and churches over the next 60 years .

In 1856 , another hotel had been built west of the Royal Albion on land previously occupied by Williams 's Royal Hot and Cold Baths , an indoor bath @-@ house . The Lion Mansion Hotel was architecturally similar to the Royal Albion , and rose to four storeys . It was later known as the Adelphi Hotel . In 1963 , it was taken over by the Royal Albion , and became physically linked to it as a west wing .

= = = Fire = = =

On the morning of 24 November 1998 , the hotel was devastated by a fire which started in the kitchen . A chef was frying eggs and sausages in a pan ; hot fat spilt and caught light , and flames were immediately sucked up a vent to the top floor . The fire spread quickly , assisted by strong winds , and all 160 people in the building were evacuated . The Public and Commercial Services Union had to cancel their annual conference , due to be held that day , because of the disruption caused to its delegates , most of whom were staying at the hotel . About 160 firefighters from all parts of East and West Sussex attended the fire from about 8.20am until late in the evening , in what was later described as Brighton 's " biggest firefighting operation for nearly 30 years " . All parts of the hotel were affected by smoke , water and structural damage , but the original corner building was particularly badly affected .

= = Architecture = =

In its present form , the Royal Albion Hotel is in three linked sections , all stylistically similar . The original (eastern) wing is four storeys tall and has five extremely large Corinthian and Composite columns on the north face . These are flanked on both sides by large pilasters , which also run all round the east face . The top floor is an attic storey displaying Wilds 's characteristic motif : shell designs set in blank rounded tympana . Above this is a mansard roof , now mostly obscured . The centre section , dating from about 1847 , has three full storeys and two attic floors above , and is therefore taller . The façade has three bays . The theme of large pilasters and columns continues , but different styles are used : the left and right bays project slightly and have paired Tuscan pilasters , and a pair of tapering Ionic columns in the centre bay form a distyle in antis composition . The centre section also has a mansard roof ? apparently a later addition . The western wing (the former Lion Mansions) has a Tuscan @-@ columned porch on the south (seafront) side and a Doric @-@ style equivalent facing north to Old Steine , four Composite pilasters extending for three of the four storeys , small cast @-@ iron balconies and some aedicula @-@ style window surrounds .

= = Present day = =

The Royal Albion Hotel was listed at Grade II * on 13 October 1952 . Such buildings are defined as being " particularly important ... [and] of more than special interest " . In February 2001 , it was one of 70 Grade II * -listed buildings and structures , and 1 @,@ 218 listed buildings of all grades , in the city of Brighton and Hove . The west wing (the former Lion Mansions) was listed at Grade II on 5 August 1999 . In February 2001 , it was one of 1 @,@ 124 buildings listed at that grade in Brighton and Hove ; the status indicates that the building is considered " nationally important and of special interest " .

The hotel is operated by Britannia Hotels . There are 208 guest rooms , one restaurant , two bars and five rooms for conferences and meetings . Bedrooms are classified in four grades , from standard to deluxe . It has a 3 @-@ star rating .