



CLARIDGE'S



CLARIDGE'S HISTORY

Since first opening its doors Claridge's has been the destination for fashionable London. Bought in 1854 by Mr and Mrs William Claridge, the hotel received the ultimate accolade in 1860 when Queen Victoria visited Claridge's to see her friend Empress Eugenie of France. This was the beginning of a tradition of royal visits, which continues to this day. Claridge's has even been called the annex to Buckingham Palace, as foreign heads of state, invited to dine at the Palace, return hospitality by hosting a banquet at the hotel.

In 1893 Claridge's was bought by Richard d'Oyly Carte, owner of the Savoy, who commissioned C.W. Stephens, famous for designing Harrods, to demolish the original buildings and erect the elegant seven storey hotel, which stands today. The new Claridge's opened its doors in 1898.

By 1929, when London's bright young things were partying as if their lives depended upon it, Claridge's was in need of some modernisation. Oswald Milne, a pioneer of the art deco movement was invited in. The entrance, still an awkward, old-fashioned carriage driveway was transformed into the spectacular, elegant lobby, with its revolving door, glamorous mirrors and 'leaping deer' lamps which still, 75 years later, looks modern and contemporary. At this time, a new wing was added with 80 new rooms and the beautiful Ballroom. Much of the original furniture, lighting and decoration from this time remain and it is this heritage which gives Claridge's its title of art deco jewel of Mayfair.

During the Second World War Claridge's became a haven for exiled royalty and heads of state. The Kings of Greece, Norway and Yugoslavia and the Queen of The Netherlands stayed for the duration, as did the presidents of both Poland and Czechoslovakia. On July 17th 1945 Winston Churchill declared suite 212 Yugoslavian territory for a day and a clod of Yugoslavian earth was laid under the bed, so that Crown Prince Alexander II could be born on his own country's soil.

After the war, in 1947, just before the wedding of the then Princess Elizabeth, a harassed diplomat telephoned Claridge's and asked to speak to the King. "Certainly sir," was the response, "but which one?"

Popular with kings, presidents, prime ministers and financiers, Claridge's also attracted most of the golden names of Hollywood, including Yul Brynner, Audrey Hepburn, Cary Grant and Bing Crosby. When Katharine Hepburn stayed she was reminded that the dress code of the day decreed that ladies should not wear trousers in the lobby, she acknowledged the rule but simply chose to use the Staff Entrance instead!

In 1956 Bugarin and Khrushchev made Claridge's their headquarters during their controversial stay in London. They held a cocktail party in the Royal Suite, which got so crowded that 'buttons popped off jackets and wine was spilt on ladies dresses...', not so different really from the penthouse party held in 2004 to celebrate Kate Moss' 30th birthday! Throughout the Twentieth century Claridge's has been the home of the great and the good of the worlds of film, fashion and finance, the opinion formers, the movers and shakers, the chic and most fashionable of the day.

Just before the turn of the century in 1998, to celebrate its centenary, Claridge's was once again lovingly restored. Its elegant lines and gracious features were re-polished, refreshed and re-presented to the world. The designer Thierry Despont, with detailed reference to the work

of Basil Ionides and Oswald Milne, sympathetically and with exquisite taste, created the restaurant, Gordon Ramsay at Claridge's, the intimate and chic Fumoir bar, The Foyer and the Reading Room. The nineteenth century and art deco details were not simply kept but celebrated and set off to advantage by the addition of contemporary pieces, such as the beautiful Dale Chihuly light sculpture, of over 800 pieces of hand-blown glass, which hangs in The Foyer.

Today Claridge's is full of life and laughter. Graced by an international and discerning clientele who appreciate Claridge's heritage and beauty, its extraordinarily high standards of service and, perhaps most important of all in today's publicity crazed society, its discretion.

ABOUT CLARIDGE'S

At the centre of London's Mayfair, Claridge's embodies grand English style, timeless glamour and impeccable, intuitive and highly tailored service. It is London's art deco jewel, and home to breathtaking rooms and suites. From London's finest afternoon tea in the Foyer and stunning cuisine from Gordon Ramsay at Claridge's to vintage champagnes and rare spirits at Claridge's Bar or after-dinner drinks in the Fumoir, all are part of the hotel's unique splendor and charm.

ABOUT MAYBOURNE HOTEL GROUP

Maybourne Hotel Group owns and manages Claridge's, the Connaught and the Berkeley, three of the world's most legendary five-star hotels, located in the heart of London. Maybourne Hotel Group is committed to delivering authentic and unique guest experiences that reflect the individual nature of its hotels, its guests and its staff whilst maintaining a timeless elegance and intuitive service style that are the hallmarks of its properties.

For further information, please contact our Press Office:

Paula Fitzherbert or Orla Hickey

Phone: +44 (0) 207 201 1607 / 207 201 1664

pfitzherbert@claridges.co.uk

ohickey@claridges.co.uk