



# THE WALDORF HILTON



A GRANDE DAME HOTEL IN LONDON'S THEATRELAND HAS HAD A TOTAL MAKEOVER TO PROVIDE A STUNNING VENUE. MIKE SAWYER WENT TO SEE THE MARBLED HALLS.

It was the first hotel to be bought by the late Charles Forte, in 1959 – the start of what became an 800-strong hotel empire. Its Palm Court glass covered dining area was the inspiration for the main dining room aboard The Titanic.

Built in 1908 The Waldorf is a striking and historic feature set among the theatres and restaurants of Aldwych, on the Strand.

Now known as The Waldorf Hilton, following its acquisition by Hilton in January 2004, a £35 million refurbishment has been completed. All public areas including the lobby, meeting and function rooms and the 300 bedrooms (at £45,000 per room) have been renovated.

And this included £4 million on Homage Grand Salon, Homage Patisserie & Homage Bar – a concept created by restaurateur Roy Ackerman in conjunction with Waldorf Hilton General Manager Amanda Scott, to pay tribute to the Grand Cafes of Europe and restore the true grandeur of The Waldorf of the past.

Homage Bar offers a glimpse of the eclectic materials and finishes that are incorporated within the Grand Salon & Patisserie and features a gin based as well as a Classic cocktail collection.

Homage Grand Salon is located in the original 1908 Grill Room and its Grade 2 listed features are characteristic of the Louis XVI style. This grandly proportioned space has 95 seats with a feature bar and walk-in wine cabinet.

The new design takes a sympathetic approach to the existing fabric while introducing contemporary elements so as to fuse old with new. The stunning columns, ceiling roses & corning have been restored to their former glory.

Homage Patisserie features original restored Waring & Gillow paneling. Amongst the rich fabrics and period furniture the focal point is a 'jewel box' counter displaying fine pastries by day and serving champagne cocktails by night.

Continued on page 50 ➞





“The refurbishment has transformed the hotel – we have retained the best of the history but brought in the amenities that guests need in the 21st Century”

Guests were not disturbed by the redecoration. A whole floor of rooms, or half floor, was blocked off at a time while the work took place.

Each bedroom has been decorated to one of two themes. “Design” rooms use bright colours (satsuma, indigo and crimson), glass dividers between bedrooms and bathrooms, and mirrors to create a funky, minimalist environment, while the “contemporary” rooms feature restored original Waldorf furniture and illuminated artbox headboards. All rooms feature Ligne Roset beds, pique linen, power showers, plasma television screens and high-speed internet access.

As the refurbishment continued into the public areas, Scott ensured that disruption was minimal to guests. Areas of work were screened off with permanent-looking partitions, decorated with cornices to blend in with the decor of the rest of the building. Pictures were also hung and the lighting adjusted to give the usual feel to the premises.

Builders and decorators were on site between 8am and 5pm, but all noisy work was restricted to between 10am and 4pm.

Guests were updated via e-mails and newsletters about the state of the redecoration and – when making a booking – were always told about the on-going refurbishment.

“Our strategy was to reposition The Waldorf as one of the finest hotels in London,” says Amanda Scott who has led the hotel through the refurbishment and its recent acquisition process.

“It is historic and well-known but was tired and past its sell-by date. The refurbishment has transformed the hotel – we have retained the best of the history but brought in the amenities that guests need in the 21st Century

“For the event market, we wanted to establish The Adelphi Suite and Palm Court as venues in their own right and the refurbishment has removed some inappropriate décor from the 70s and restored their elegance.

“We do all the London theatre premiers here – recently, for example, for *The Producers* and *Shall We Dance*.” The Adelphi can hold up to 1250 for cocktails and canapés or 410 for a banquet.

“Homage is a positioning statement that defines the character, life and vitality of the hotel and reflects a more informal and relaxed Grand Café concept.”

Mike Coldicott FCSI of Tricon Foodservice Consultants and one of Tricon’s Senior Project Directors, Gareth Sefton, were originally appointed by the Hotel’s owners, Royal Bank of Scotland, to work with the appointed design team in establishing spatial and logistical requirements for the proposed food and beverage operations in advance of the Hotel operator being selected.

This role was of primary importance in that the planning had to consider optimal flexibility to ensure that it did not alienate any potential operators.

Once Hilton International were selected by the Bank, Tricon worked closely with the Hotel’s appointed food and beverage team to ensure that kitchens, bars and buffet serveries delivered the required service. Tricon were responsible for the full detail design of all back of house areas and worked closely with the Interior Designers, Astronaut, to ensure that the bars and buffets not only looked great but operated efficiently.

“The brief for Homage evolved over a period of time and Tricon were very supportive to us during our recent transition of ownership.,” said Amanda Scott. “Creating Homage is very much a significant event of my career and has boosted the morale of the entire hotel. Mike and Gareth are very professional and are very much specialists in this area. The quality of workmanship is superb; the project came in on budget we are delighted with the results.”

Websites [www.tricon.co.uk](http://www.tricon.co.uk) [www.hilton.co.uk/waldorf](http://www.hilton.co.uk/waldorf)

Above and left  
The grand surroundings are proving  
popular with the theatre events