



THE ST. ERMIN'S
AUTOBIOGRAPHY

ST. ERMIN'S  HOTEL
distinctly individual

AUTOGRAPH COLLECTION®
HOTELS

Since opening its doors in 1899, St. Ermin's Hotel has been reflecting and influencing the history, the people and events in Westminster.

Groundbreaking architects, covert operations and traitorous meetings involving double agents, the hotel has witnessed and been involved in them all. It is probably no coincidence that the hotel's proximity to the Houses of Parliament has put St. Ermin's centre stage in Westminster's colourful past, present and no doubt future.



A nighttime photograph of the St. Ermin's Hotel courtyard. The central building is illuminated with warm lights, and a large arched trellis structure is visible in the foreground. The surrounding buildings are also lit up, creating a vibrant urban scene.

ST. ERMIN'S HOTEL
an important Westminster
LANDMARK SINCE 1887

By the mid to late 19th century, Westminster was undergoing great changes and an increasing population. To house the growing numbers, mansion blocks (smart serviced flats) were becoming a very popular choice, with the first being built by E.T. Hall in nearby Victoria Street. So it is unsurprising that in 1889 St. Ermin's Mansions were built, and it is this mansion block that forms the basis of St. Ermin's Hotel.

St. Ermin's Mansions were typical of a classic mansion block in both plan and elevation, and the red brick Queen Anne style that you still see on the hotel today was the fashionable choice. E. T. Hall, primarily known as the designer of London's most flamboyant department store Liberty & Co., grouped the blocks around a courtyard which acted, much like today, as both carriageway and garden for residents. Four entrances led off this courtyard into the flats, of which the two in the hotel's side entrances still exist in their original form.

By 1894 it appears that the mansion block seems to have been extended along Broadway as far as St. Ermin's Hill.

DO YOU KNOW WHY WE ARE CALLED ST. ERMIN'S?

Because the hotel was built on the site of a 15th century chapel originally built by Henry II in thanks for an Irish monk's prayers which he believed saved him and his fleet from a stormy death off the French coast. That monk went on to be canonised as St. Ermin.



DRAMATIC DESIGN *takes centre stage*

When guests enter the hotel, the first thing they notice is often the dramatic plasterwork in the lobby, particularly the sweeping staircase.

Victorian theatre designer J.P. Briggs, who in 1899 was heavily involved in the transformation from mansion block to hotel, designed the hotel's iconic plasterwork. Briggs, who famously designed London's Savoy Theatre, drew on his skills as a theatre designer to create a collection of stunning and dramatic reception rooms embellished throughout with rich plasterwork.

So when you are sitting in the lobby take a look around you, all the plasterwork you will see, is original and a stunning example of Victorian craftsmanship at its very highest level.



The lounge - circa 1900



The lobby - circa 1900





SERVING VIP GUESTS
throughout history

The hotel has always welcomed distinguished guests, and none more so than Sir Winston Churchill. In 1940, during World War II, the newly appointed British Prime Minister formed what would become known as the SOE (Special Operations Executive), whose main aim was to conduct espionage, sabotage and reconnaissance. This organisation, made up of a collection of handpicked individuals, took over an entire floor of St. Ermin's Hotel as its headquarters, and it was in this hotel that Churchill, who often enjoyed a glass of his favourite Champagne in Caxton Bar, charged the SOE to "set Europe ablaze". The SOE, also known as Churchill's Secret Army, formed the basis of the SAS; so if you happen to be in Caxton Bar, raise a glass to some of the bravest men and women in history.

SEE THE GREAT MAN FOR YOURSELF

Just eight minutes walk from St. Ermin's in Parliament Square, is the famous bronze sculpture by Ivor Roberts-Jones of Sir Winston Churchill. It is located on the spot that supposedly Churchill described as "where my statue will go".

Secret tunnels AND OFFICIAL CALLS *to The Houses* *of Parliament*



On a pillar in the lobby is the hotel's Division Bell, a bell rung to signal MPs that they had only eight minutes to get to the House of Commons to vote for or against a resolution. These bells were all located in what is known as the Westminster Bubble - within eight minutes fast walk back to the Houses of Parliament. The Division Bell that is now at St. Ermin's is authentic in every detail, aside from the fact that it no longer rings as the practice of calling MPs back to House has been discontinued.

However if rumours are to be believed, MPs could use a secret tunnel to get back to Parliament. This tunnel is said to be located under the grand staircase in the Lobby and runs directly to The House of Commons, maybe you will be the first person to discover the entrance?

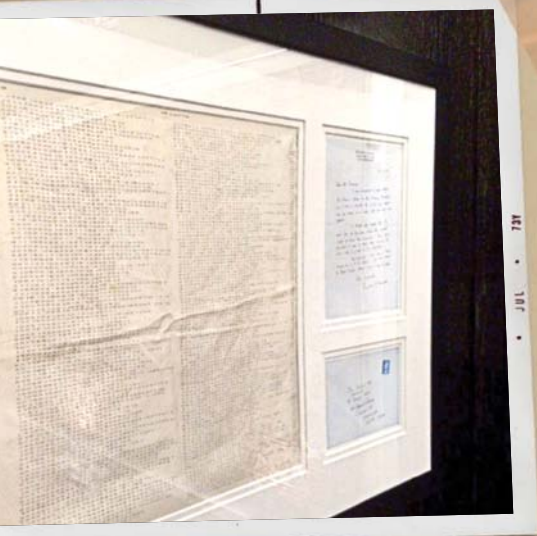


The division bell can be seen in the lobby

TOP SECRET

TEST YOUR CODE BREAKING SKILLS

Why not try to crack the code on the original SOE silk code that hangs in the Lobby? SOE agents printed secret coded messages on pieces of silk such as this, these important messages could then be easily hidden in the lining or lapel of an agent's jacket.



Unlock your inner spy IMMERSE YOURSELF IN *espionage history*

No other publicly accessible space in London has such strong links with British spies as St. Ermin's, nowhere puts you closer to the world of shadows and intrigue.

During the 1930's, St. Ermin's was used by officers of the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS and MI6) located close by at 54 Broadway to meet agents. From March 1938, SIS used the hotel as their Section D headquarters, subsequently SOE made their home here under the guise of 'Statistical Research Department'.

Throughout the Second World War, the hotel's location put it at the very epicentre of the war's espionage activities. Neighbouring organisations included the London branch of Government Headquarters (in Palmer Street), MI9 in Caxton Street, the SIS Chief's office at 21 Queen Anne's Gate, the SIS offices in Artillery Mansions on Victoria Street and the MI8 listening post on the roof of the Passport Office in Petty France.

Caxton Bar in particular was a popular meeting point for SIS, MI5 and the Naval Intelligence Division, it was here that they would meet their agents and prospective employees.

Shortly before WWII, St. Ermin's was the venue for guerrilla warfare classes run partly by MI6; notable students included Noel Coward and Anthony Blunt who was eventually proved to be a member of the Cambridge Five – a group of double agents recruited whilst at Cambridge University and who eventually rose to offices of both power and prestige in the British establishment.

Cold war spies IN A WARM AND *welcoming bar*

The hotel's association with British history continued after the Second World War, when double agent and eventual defector Guy Burgess is heavily rumoured to have used the Caxton Bar to meet his Russian counterpart, where he handed over secret government files.

The publishing house St. Ermin's Press, specialising in intelligence matters, was named after the hotel and its strong links to espionage.

RECOGNISING HISTORY BY AWARDING INTELLIGENCE

St. Ermin's has always been strongly associated with British espionage, and its proximity to Whitehall could still imply that those past links are as strong as ever. In 2012 as acknowledgement of this long connection, the hotel set up the St. Ermin's Hotel Intelligence Book of the Year Award. So should the hotel's history move you to put pen to paper, who knows you might be revisiting the hotel for a very special award.



CLASSIFIED

RICH IN HISTORY, *looking to the future*

Though steeped in history, the hotel always looks forward, particularly concerning environmental issues. That is why the hotel is home to 300,000+ Buckfast bees. Not only do they provide the hotel with some delicious honey, they also serve an important environmental role.

These friendly bees love living in London, as they have fantastic access to London's parks and gardens of Buckingham Palace, all within their three-mile flight radius, to collect a wide variety of pollen and nectar, which gives their honey a truly delicious taste.

The capital's natural tendency to trap heat means that the St. Ermin's bees can start foraging earlier in the year than their rural cousins and continue later into Autumn, this translates into extra delicious honey, which finds its way into various dishes and cocktails throughout the hotel.



*Bee Hotel - 3rd floor
St. Ermin's Hotel 2014*

DID YOU KNOW THAT ST. ERMIN'S HAS A SECOND HOTEL?

Pop up to the hotel's third floor to take a look at another hotel. This hotel, like St. Ermin's, is designed to make its guests feel at home. Hexagonal suites provide a home for a wide variety of bee species, whilst peaceful bamboo nesting areas and condominiums (modern block or traditional log style) are for solitary bees such as the leaf cutter bee, and the bijou boxes are for social bees like the tree bumble bee.

This hotel also provides a variety of special areas for other helpful insects. The discerning lacewing will be enchanted by the rolled cardboard swirls, and all types of ladybirds, earwigs, woodlice and spiders will find peaceful resting places amongst the crevice stacks.



Bee Hotel - from above



The Lobby during the fifties



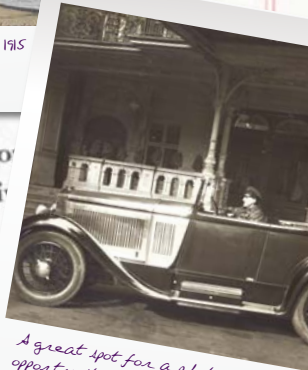
St. Ermin's Honey - fresh from our rooftop hives



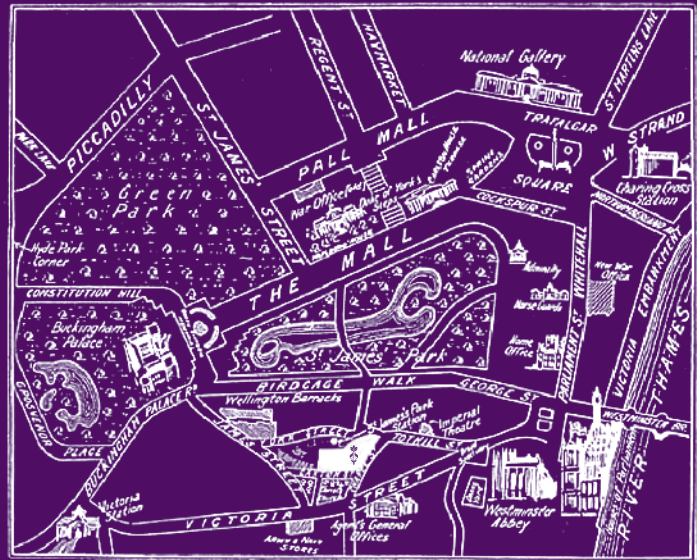
Courtyard - circa 1915



The Clarendon Suite during the fifties



A great spot for a photo opportunity



St. Ermin's Hotel, Caxton Street, London SW1H 0QW

per day.
per day.
per day.

Bathroom.
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Attendance



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