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how to spend it

Jeremy Goring - Day 1

A royal visit gets The Goring's 105th birthday celebrations off to a flying start for the hotelier



MARCH 03 2015

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Today is the hotel's 105th birthday; it will not be a normal day.

I'm a little bit nervous – and very “dry”. Last night I had the privilege of hosting a dinner at Hyde Park Barracks, home to the Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment. The Goring's chef, Shay Cooper, managing director David Morgan-Hewitt and I entertained 30 very important travel agents from across America. The table was laden with regimental silver and we were surrounded by soldiers in full ceremonial dress; I can't thank Lt Col Bedford enough for having us. Away matches like these are always challenging and on this occasion we had to get our food up two flights of stairs without it getting cold. Somehow the team nailed it. For my part, I managed not to make any faux pas (such as discussing religion, neocolonialism or pornography). Phew!

I ditch my bicycle this morning as I don't want to be run down by a van in my sorry state. Today we're hosting another 70 people for a celebratory birthday lunch and I have my welcome speech to consider. Trouble is, here I am at our daily arrivals meeting – known as Morning Prayers – and I think I'm going to pass out. I'm simply not tough enough for such revelry on a school night. In the old days, the life of a hotelier involved endless late dinners and banquets – I think my predecessors must have been a much more resilient breed. Typically, today's Morning Prayers is a busy one. There are a lot of VIPs arriving, as well as a royal guest of honour.

We've been renovating the hotel for seven years and recently closed for the first time ever for the final flourish, a fabulous new front hall covered with hand-painted Fromental wallpaper. It features an English landscape with exotic animals running through it. Our designer Russell Sage and the Fromental team have depicted my great-great-grandfather as a walrus and me as a seal. What does that say about us as family, I wonder?

Jet-wash cleaning is happening everywhere, a 30-piece military band needs to be correctly positioned, and we have to decide exactly where every guest and staff member will be posted for the arrival.

It's time to revisit the seating plan yet again. The challenge is to get everybody into the right place so that people who think they're more important than everyone else continue to feel so without anybody else feeling less important. Interestingly, this notional pecking order seems to correlate directly with the size of the various hairdos.

A crowd has gathered outside the front door, including four paparazzi – very unusual for this little hideaway and not a comfortable situation. The dining room, laid out and decked with a forest of flowers, looks incredible. I think we're ready. By noon, our guests have gathered; there's a sense of anticipation and curtsies are being practised everywhere. Many of our guests are used to meeting presidents, celebrities and grandees but these seasoned senior captains of industry and the world of travel are looking nervous.

Our guest of honour arrives and meets the other guests, who are enraptured. There really is magic in the air. I do an awful lot of blushing. Shay and the team have put together three completely mind-altering dishes; a lemony, zesty native lobster tail, a delicate and very simple Hereford Beef Wellington and a very slightly salted peanut caramel that has everybody in ecstasy. It's one of the best things I've ever eaten. On my stroll through the kitchen afterwards, everybody is quite blasé about the perfection they've just created. What a team.

In the afternoon we get back to normal. Everyone's relieved that it all went so well. I have a meeting with our US sales team. Having spent the past few years completely renovating The Goring from top to bottom, we need to make sure everyone knows.

Evening arrives and I have a bit of a wander, meeting various guests, including those who were at the lunch. Some say that this was the best day of their lives. All in all, a good day.

Jeremy Goring is chief executive of The Goring, the boutique hotel in Belgravia opened by his great grandfather O R Goring in 1910. After graduating from the Lausanne Hotel School in 1988, Goring's career started at the Four Seasons and The Lanesborough in London, followed by a stint opening hotels for Rosewood in Mexico, the Caribbean and Indonesia. He then went on to manage the Observatory in Sydney for Orient Express Hotels before returning to the UK in 2005 to join the family firm as CEO.