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Mazeltov! King David Suite to reopen

By **Simon Rocker**, April 24, 2013
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In its heyday the King David Suite was one of London's most popular venues for weddings and barmitzvahs

The horas are set to spin again and toasts to the Queen and the President of the state of Israel be raised once more at what was one of London's most popular simchah venues.

For 14 years the King David Suite has gathered cobwebs below the Western Marble Arch Synagogue in the West End. But now it is about to enjoy a new lease of banqueting life as the Grand Ballroom of the neighbouring Montcalm Hotel.

It will be available for kosher functions and remain accessible from the synagogue through a passage dubbed by some Western Marble Archers as the "drawbridge".

Baroness Thatcher, several royals and celebrities ranging from Eric Morecambe to Muhammad Ali were among the VIPs who dined at the King David.

The guest list at one of the final charity events staged there before its closure included Oasis guitarist Noel Gallagher and model Kate Moss.

Even after the mazeltovs no longer resounded for real, it was used to film the wedding scenes of the 2004 Anglo-Jewish comedy Suzie Gold.

"It's like coming home," said Carole Sobell, who began her career in kosher catering at the venue. "It means something to every Jewish family in London. Grandparents were married, parents barmitzvahed there. Everyone I come across has fond memories of it."

The venue - which was opened by caterer Victor Schaverien in 1961 - has undergone a complete makeover at a cost "in excess of £5 million", according to Montcalm area manager John O'Neill.

A spectacular 10-metre chandelier, consisting of 1,800 droplets of Austrian crystal, adorns the centre of the renovated ballroom, while shiny cauldrons await their first sauce or soup in a state-of-the-art kitchen.

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"They have done a fantastic refurb," said Ms Sobell. "There have been many attempts to get it done but it's finally happened."

The Western Charitable Foundation acquired the venue from the United Synagogue for £650,000 in 1998 but shut it because of the lack of a permanent caterer and the need for renovation. None of the plans mooted to reopen it, including for a Jewish cultural centre, came to fruition until the five-star Montcalm stepped in.

A spokesman for the Western Foundation said: "We have been working for some years to bring this much-loved venue back into use for the benefit of the community and we are delighted that a refurbishment to the highest standards will do just that, and provide a very attractive place for celebrations, conferences and major meetings."

The reopening has not gone quite without a hitch. A relaunch party for the Jewish community which was scheduled for earlier this month had to be cancelled at the last minute as work was still being done on the building. But the canapes and cocktails are expected to be circulating soon.

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