

Source: Portman, The {Main}
Edition:
Country: UK
Date: Thursday 1, August 2013
Page: 48,49
Area: 517 sq. cm
Circulation: Pub Stmt 16000 Quarterly
Ad data: page rate £1,550.00, scc rate £0.00
Phone: 020 7259 1050
Keyword: The Grand Ballroom

New kid on the block

After gathering dust for over a decade, a popular party venue in Great Cumberland Place has been given the five-star treatment by a boutique hotel. Lorna Davies finds out more

STANDING BENEATH the spectacular sparkling chandelier that adorns the ceiling of the striking renovated ballroom at The Montcalm hotel, it's hard to believe the room lay cobweb-covered and dormant for over a decade before a deal was struck to save it.

The hotel itself, situated on Great Cumberland Place, was officially opened in September 2009 after a substantial overhaul by the owners of London brand Shaftesbury Hotels. Formerly a Japan Airlines hotel, The Montcalm is now five-star AA-rated and exudes relaxation and luxury.

The Grand Ballroom opened on May 9 after a £4 million refurbishment. Formerly called the King David Suite, the owners were unaware of the large room in between the hotel and a synagogue next door when they first moved in and were approached by the Western Charitable Foundation to save it from ruin.

"It had been empty for 15 years. All the kitchens needed replacing and it needed a lot of money spent on it," says Peter Thomas, 44, head of legal at Precis Management, the real-estate company behind Montcalm Hotels, Park Grand Hotels and Shaftesbury Premier Hotels.

The kitchens are now state-of-the-art, suitable for Montcalm's head chef Andy Ives, who also provides catering for the ballroom.

Barry Mullin from The Manser Practice – the firm behind the interior design of the Waldorf Hotel, as well as the other 153 rooms and 14 lavish suites at The Montcalm – has continued the modern feel of the hotel, with bespoke customisable colour lighting set in the ceiling and dark-wood panelling on the walls of the ballroom.

Montcalm general manager Sabine Altschaeffl, 36, says the events already held in the ballroom have been a success, with customers judging the new space a breath of fresh air compared with more old-fashioned venues available elsewhere in London.

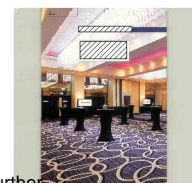
"I call it the new kid on the block, because a new W1 venue of this size is quite unusual. We've had a lot of positive comments already," she says.

Altschaeffl also expects the venue to be very busy because of the hotel's close relationship with the Western Marble Arch Synagogue next door. "There's a huge history there from the King David Suite before and we want to continue that," she says.

The Grand Ballroom holds up to 600 people standing for cocktail functions, 550 for theatre-style conferences and 350 for sit-down dinners; it is also licensed for weddings.

34-40 Great Cumberland Place. Info: 020 7958 3224, events@montcalm.co.uk, www.montcalm.co.uk.

Poor Publication Print Quality



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