

The Balmoral celebrates a big birthday today



110 years old today – and still looking good!

Edinburgh's beloved 'Grande Dame' is celebrating its 110th anniversary this month with newly refurbished guest bedrooms and a series of events and activities for the year ahead.

The Balmoral opened its doors on 15th October 1902 as the North British Station Hotel, described by the architects as 'a free rendering of the Renaissance period'. Taking its place on the Edinburgh skyline in the heart of the city, the hotel linked the Scottish architecture of the Old Town with the classical architecture of the New Town.

✘ The hotel's roots were quite literally in the railway with a dedicated entrance from Waverley Station to the hotel. The iconic clock tower was set three minutes fast to allow travellers to catch their trains – a tradition which has remained to this day with the exception of Hogmanay for the city's New Year street party.

The North British Railway Company owned the property for over 80 years until it was sold in 1983 to The Gleneagles Hotel Company. In 1990 Balmoral International Hotels purchased the building and closed the doors for over a year to complete a £23-million refurbishment. The company recaptured the splendor of the hotel and invited Sir Sean Connery to cut the ribbon on the official re-opening of newly named hotel 'The Balmoral' – meaning 'majestic dwelling' in Gaelic.

On 1st March 1997, Sir Rocco Forte purchased The Balmoral as the first in his new collection of luxury five star hotels.

The location held a strong connection to the Forte family with Sir Rocco's father, Lord Forte, spending most of his childhood in Scotland.

Over the years, a regular stream of royalty, film stars, sports and music personalities, politicians and literary figures visited the hotel including The Queen Mother, Laurel and Hardy, Sophia Loren, Elizabeth Taylor, Paul and Linda McCartney, The Rolling Stones, Luciano Pavarotti, Tom Hanks, Oprah Winfrey and JK Rowling.

Over the past 15 years, The Balmoral has undergone a series of refurbishments with Rocco Forte Hotels at the helm, most recently with a three year soft refurbishment project of all its bedrooms and bathrooms which was completed in June 2012.

Olga Polizzi, Rocco Forte Hotels' Director of Design, took inspiration for the interior of the new rooms from the earthy colours of the moors, mists and heathers associated with the Scottish countryside. Stylish new Italian marble bathrooms have also been fitted to all 188 bedrooms, many featuring iconic Sir Sean Connery prints from the 1962 James Bond film 'Dr No' – a nod to the 'Freeman of the City' who opened the hotel in the early 90s.

The hotel has gone from strength to strength with 2012 marking, not only the 110th anniversary of the hotel but the 10th year of Michelin-star status at fine-dining restaurant *number one*; Executive Chef Jeff Bland's Chef of the Year accolade at the Scottish Restaurant Awards and The Balmoral being named as one of the Top 10 Luxury Hotels in the UK in Trip Advisor's Travellers' Choice Awards.

Commenting on the milestone anniversary, The Balmoral's General Manager Franck Arnold, said:

“As we start our 110th year at The Balmoral, we celebrate the past 11 decades of this iconic Edinburgh institution. From award-winning afternoon tea at *Palm Court* to Michelin-starred dining at *number one* and the finest of accommodation and entertainment, The Balmoral offers timeless luxury and warm Scottish hospitality to all our visitors.

“As custodians of The Balmoral we will continue to offer memorable experiences for our guests and uphold the legacy that has been created to this day by the staff who work here, the guests who visit us and the people of Edinburgh who have embraced the hotel as their own.”

The Balmoral’s 110th Anniversary celebrations will commence with a glittering cocktail reception for 250 guests on 1st November. A series of special menus, cocktails, events and improvements will be revealed throughout the 110th year celebrating the best of The Balmoral over the decades.