

Eleven Stafford Street – shining once more

A new boutique hotel has just opened on Stafford Street in a building which its new owners describe as “old, squint, empty and unloved”.

Caroline and Nick Claydon bought the former offices and after a complete makeover the Georgian townhouse will become an elegant family owned 15-room hotel in the West End. When we spoke there was a last minute flurry of activity taking place in the background as the carpets were being put down and furniture was being moved in.

Caroline explained she had been assisted in the design by Claire Johnston from I Am Nomad design from Glasgow and every room will have one of four different colour themes. Claire has sourced bespoke furniture for every room. Caroline explained that as well as the four different colour schemes there will be another colour scheme in the hallway. The most up to date photos will either be on Caroline’s Instagram account or the hotel website.

This is a hotel with a number of different features. There will be no welcome staff as everything is based on a set of systems – including the heating in bedrooms which will run according to the people in the room, and not simply on the numbers on the thermostats. With no reception staff hotel guests will be able to come and go as they please which Caroline said is what they find visitors want.

She explained: “My husband Nick and I have been investing in property since 2008 first in buy to let with properties which were made available as social housing, then HMOs down south and for students, charities and young professionals. Then we got the chance to buy a guesthouse in Southport and thought it would be interesting to try that. We cut our teeth down there and really enjoyed it but were a bit intimidated to enter the property market in Edinburgh. We were fortunate – there were ten other offers for the property even though it was squint and falling down. They accepted our offer because of our track record and then we started the planning process which was quite horrific at times.

“There have been lots of bumps in the road but we are looking forward to opening on Stafford Street – just as long as the water is connected by then. We are going for a soft opening and hope to open to the public by late November.”

She continued: “We want to bring as much business to the West End as possible and there are a number of businesses who are open to collaborations with us – although we are very much the new kid on the block. Occupancy levels should be at 80% and we have 15 double rooms so we only need 30 people. But it is hundreds of extra people who will come to the area to shop.

There will be a hotel manager appointed at Eleven Stafford Street but nobody will actually be on site permanently.

The rooms only hotel has a range of ensuite accommodation from “intimate cozy doubles to spacious signature rooms”. All are kitted out with high end features such as a GHD Air hairdryer (although hairdresser Charlie Miller is right next door). There are luxury robes and a De Longhi pod coffee machine in each room.

And if available then all fifteen rooms can be booked together for a special occasion.

This is not the first hotel the couple have set up – their

first is in Southport and they already plan a second Edinburgh address at Leith Links where there is another town house which is just waiting to be converted into another boutique hotel. Both addresses will be very accessible as they are close to tram and bus routes as well as shops and restaurants.

Caroline is born and bred in Edinburgh and said that her great grandfather was the sergeant at the Leith police station. Her family are from Leith and so it is a bit sentimental having a part of their business in Leith. She and her husband Nick met through work and have gone on to create a property based business together.

Identifying what sets their business apart Caroline said that they have deliberately targeted whole townhouses in the capital. She said: "I was quoted by a property agent that there are only about 40 whole townhouses left in the New Town. We were keen to keep Stafford Street as one house. We want it to be really accessible and our research showed that people want the self check in and check out. People definitely rank hairdryers high up on their wish list so that is why we have gone for the GHD dryers – and there will be GHD hairdryers in our next place too.

With designer furnishings Caroline felt it needed its own bespoke range of hand made Scottish products. That is where Nadine Pierce came in. Nadine founded [Pentland Aromatics](#) and was delighted to be asked to help with this part of the project.

Caroline explained: "There will be no welcome staff at Eleven Stafford Street. We have combined the experience of an Edinburgh townhouse with all its features like cornicing and all of that, but have systemised everything else. So we have combined two worlds and to make everything a bit different I wanted to have our own product range where guests can Shop their Stay. Everyone comments on the mattresses we use in our other property saying they are "ridiculously comfortable" and

then I got to thinking that people might like to buy the robes which we provide. It evolved from there and I reached out through Edinburgh Gossip Girls (EGG) and I met Nadine – who I had met before when I was in recruitment. She was the only one who could spend the time and energy coming up with a scent that I liked and she put together a whole range of hand and body wash, hand and body lotion, shampoo and conditioner. We have four products and these will all be branded for the hotel.”



Nadine said: "Caroline had posted on the egg Facebook group looking to source the hotel products from a local business and a number of people had recommended me (which was nice!)."

“I didn’t actually have some of the things in my range that she was looking for and she was struggling to find products she liked. We got chatting and she saw an opportunity for me to create a range for her, I wasn’t going to turn that down!

“That was back in April, and the first thing was to get a signature fragrance sorted as well as start on the product development.

“Let’s just say it’s been an insane learning curve for me and at times, I was thinking she’d have to go with an off-the-shelf range, but we got there and I’m now in production ready for the hotel opening.

“I am really excited to see it all come to fruition.”

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