

# The Ritz, London

The picture opposite shows a GRG conopy for the top of a display cabinet at the Ritz Fine Jewellery Department. The complex shapes of the design meant that plaster was the most economical way of forming the patterns.

Famed Swiss hotelier César Ritz opened the hotel on May 24, 1906. The building is neoclassical in the Louis XVI manner, built during the Belle Époque to resemble a stylish Parisian block of flats, over arcades that consciously evoked the Rue de Rivoli. Its architects were Charles Mewès, who had previously designed Ritz's Hôtel Ritz Paris, and Arthur Davis, with engineering collaboration by the Swedish engineer Sven Bylander. It was the first substantial steel-frame structure in London.

Ritz personally managed much of the hotel's operation for many years. He hired world-famous chef Auguste Escoffier to provide cuisine to match the opulence of the hotel's decorations; he placed a special bell in the entryway by which the doorman could notify the staff of the impending arrival of royalty. The high standards to which he held his staff and the ultimate luxury which he provided his guests had been entirely foreign to Victorian Londoners, and the sensation he caused in the hotel industry precipitated a dramatic shift in that industry's focus.

The hotel was owned for some time by the Bracewell-Smith family who also had significant stakes in the nearby Park Lane Hotel. However the oil crisis in the early 1970s affected business and prompted the family to sell their stake to Trafalgar House in 1976 for £2.75m.

David and Frederick Barclay purchased the ailing hotel for £80 Million from Trafalgar House, in October 1995, through their company Ellerman Investments. They spent eight years and £40 Million restoring it to its former grandeur.

[The Ritz Wikipedia Entry](#)

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