



City of Westminster

The Dorchester

The Dorchester was created by Malcolm McAlpine, a partner in the building company Sir Robert McAlpine & Sons and the managing director of Gordon Hotels Ltd, Sir Frances Towle, who shared a vision of creating the 'perfect hotel': ultramodern and ultra-efficient, with all the conveniences modern technology could supply.[1]. So, in 1929 their two companies jointly bought the Dorchester House, a large 19th-century building, and quickly had it demolished. Sir Owen Williams & William Curtis Green were commissioned to design the new hotel, using reinforced concrete to allow the creation of large internal spaces without support pillars.. The construction was carried out by Sir Robert McAlpine Ltd, with the upper eight floors erected in just 10 weeks, supported on a massive three feet thick reinforced concrete deck that forms the roof of the first floor.



During the Second World War, the strength of its construction gave the hotel the reputation of being one of London's safest buildings. Cabinet Ministers, such as Lord Halifax and Duff Cooper, stayed there during this time, as did Winston Churchill, who had a wall built to add privacy to his balcony, which still exists. General Dwight D. Eisenhower took a suite on the first floor (now the Eisenhower Suite) in 1942 after previously having stayed at Claridge's. Diners at the Dorchester from cultural circles during this period included Cyril Connolly, T. S. Eliot, Harold Nicolson, and Edith Sitwell.

In 1988, the hotel closed for two years for a major refit. The hotel was completely updated and the Promenade, Grill Room, and the Oliver Messel Suite were meticulously restored, to reopen in 1990.

