

News Letter September 2007-09-05

My Grandfather ran the Wentworth for 16 years. My Father ran it for 39 years, including the War years when the Hotel was occupied by the Army as a training base, and thus far I have run the hotel for 32 years. A grand total of 87 years during which my family have owned and run the Wentworth Hotel. It's easy to forget how life moves on. During my 32 years there have been many changes as there were in both my Grandfather's and Father's time. Here are a few that I have seen and also some of my earlier recollections of the hotel as it was in 1975 and before.

In 1975, the year I took over from my father, the hotel had 36 bedrooms all in the one building and could accommodate 56 guests. Now we have 35 bedrooms spread over two buildings and can accommodate 65 guests. Only eight rooms had en suite bathrooms, and only three rooms had their own phones, but every room did have its own three or two bar electric fire. When did you last see one of those? As many as 16 rooms were single rooms. Now there are only four single rooms. For those guests who did not have an "en suite" bathroom there were four public bathrooms. Bedspreads were candlewick and the décor was very simple, often just white emulsion. Interior design was not a priority.

All our staff were British and mostly, though not all, local. The Head Waiter was John Attwood, who bore a strong resemblance to Alfred Hitchcock. John came from New Romney in Kent and would arrive in Aldeburgh in time for Easter when the hotel opened for the season. He resided opposite the Bar and his bedroom was half of what was the old gents loo. The accommodation consisted of a single bed which occupied half the space, leaving him with just enough room to get dressed and undressed. This was John's home for the next six months. Like wise Margaret Angus, who was the Head Waitress, came down from Newcastle each year. Margaret had a room upstairs in the attic next to the cold water tanks. There was also Ellen who came over from Ireland each year. John and Margaret originally came to the hotel to help out for a couple of weeks and both stayed for over 40 years. When the Queen came to the Snape Maltings concert hall and lunched with Benjamin Britten and Peter Pears, Margaret and John were both asked to serve the lunch. Our present Head Waiter, Roger Myhill joined the hotel in 1964, straight from school. And as Roger will tell you, up until the mid seventies most guests stayed on full board terms and had breakfast, lunch in the restaurant(there were no such things as bar meals), followed by afternoon tea, and then dinner. The restaurant staff not only worked six days a week but were on duty for every meal except afternoon tea. Other local staff found other jobs for the winter and returned to us for the "Season". Some were retained and worked in the empty hotel, spring cleaning and decorating bedrooms (with emulsion). The hotel closed shortly after the clocks went back in October because after that time no-one ventured out to the East coast until the following Easter. Most people still only had two weeks paid holiday from work and in any case the east wind seemed to blow much more ferociously then than it does now and on some days it was impossible to keep any heat in the hotel. The idea of taking short breaks was still in its infancy and it was not until The English Tourist Board started the "Let's Go" campaign in 1977 that short breaks began to catch on.

Being closed in the winter did not necessarily mean that the hotel was not occupied – at least it was, after a fashion. In the dark winter nights an empty hotel makes a great place to play in when you are young. Every bedroom had its own system for summoning room service. Press a bell in the room and a red light would light up outside the bedroom door whilst at same time making a harsh buzz which could be heard from some distance. Meanwhile down in the Reception office a light signifying the room which required service lit up on a large panel. There were no fire doors in the hotel then and neither were any of the bedrooms locked. Not until the AA insisted that locks were fitted did the bedroom doors have keys. This meant that it was possible to move around the hotel from room to room quickly and silently, pressing buttons in bedrooms to tell the others where you were and then escaping to another part of the hotel. The best playground for Murder in the Dark! If you have ever seen Jack Nicholson in *The Shining* then you have some idea of what it was like!

As mentioned earlier only three bedrooms had telephones. But we did have an intercom system combined with radio in each room. To contact a guest, Reception would speak into a microphone and then wait for the guest to reply. It seemed like a good idea at the time but unless every one involved in the conversation had been trained in the army signal corps, it was a bit hit and miss. There were lots of “over” and “outs”. None of the bedrooms had televisions but we had one communal one in the Garden Lounge around which everybody gathered. The set was situated just outside the restaurant on what is known as the top deck. Late diners in the restaurant would have their conversations devastatingly interrupted at the nine o’clock news time when the volume was turned up full for the benefit of the deafest guest. To prevent this, I hit on the idea of removing the sliding volume control after pre- setting the volume at a sensible level. But our guests were more than equal to this and a quick excursion by one of them back into the restaurant to fetch a knife soon restored the volume by inserting the blade into the slider slot and raising the sound back up to the desired level. The decision to abandon this communal set and instead to put one in every room finally came when the hotel cat disgraced itself by choosing to perform underneath the set in the presence of an audience of embarrassed but stiff upper lipped guests.

My job for the first two seasons was in Reception. Not a job which I particularly enjoyed as it involves a degree of diplomacy and also I like to roam about the hotel to see what’s going on. The reception office then had an open fire which on cold days was laid and lit by the Porter. On quiet afternoons, of which there were many in the early and late parts of the season, the housekeeper, Kitty Botteril, would make tea and hot buttered toast and I would settle down in a comfortable chair in front of a blazing fire, eat my toast, drink my tea and then enjoy a snooze. Nobody came to the desk and no phones rang. No chance of that now even for just five minutes!

Back to the present. As usual this newsletter contains information about forthcoming events, tariffs and special offers, plus details about how we are planning to spend your money on improvements to the hotel. The staff and I look forward to welcoming you back to Aldeburgh and the Wentworth during the Autumn and if not then, then at sometime in the future.

NEW LOOS ARE GIVEN THE THUMBS UP – and so are the hand cream and the light fittings!

Every week at least two hand cream dispensers, full to brim of hand cream, disappear from the ladies loo. The hand cream is a desirable product so I can understand why someone might help themselves to it. But not Wentworth ladies, surely?

The gentlemen, on the other hand, are not given hand cream so instead they prefer to remove light fittings, or parts of each one. Every other chrome lug supporting the glass shades from each wall light mysteriously disappeared. This was quickly followed by two of the diffusers from the flush wall lights. There is a law which dictates that some of these lights are not available any more just after you have spent a small fortune buying them, so all of these will have to be replaced. And because it's impossible just to buy the chrome lugs for the wall lights additional units have to be bought to break up for spares to replace the missing parts. As the Suffolk expression goes "what makes them act so stupid" – the men anyway - the ladies seem to have the right idea

PLANS FOR 2008

As always it is our policy to continue improving the facilities to the Hotel so there are some changes planned for the coming year.

CONSERVATORY WINDOWS

We had hoped that by now the windows in the Garden lounge and conservatory restaurant would have been replaced but this did not materialise. However, it should happen this year in January. Please bear in mind that part of the lounge and restaurant will be out of commission whilst the repairs are in progress. If you feel that this might impinge on the enjoyment of your holiday, please stay away – not for ever but just while the work is in progress. One difficulty is that we do not always know the exact dates when these things will happen. The tariffs during these times of year are set partially to reflect any inconvenience caused to our guests by this and any other projects and I hope that this goes some way to compensating for any restrictions within the hotel. But we have to pay our way and we have to continually upgrade our facilities.

MORE ROOM AT THE BAR!

Over the years it has been suggested many times that perhaps the Bar is a little too small.

When and if we receive the necessary planning permission to extend outwards we can do something about this and increase the size of the Bar by about 60%. The extension will be built outwards on part of the terrace. The exterior wall will become an interior wall and the new room will be accessed by using one of the existing windows as an entrance. In essence there will be two rooms rather than the one as there is now. The open fire will be retained and that part will stay much as it is now although redecorated and

refurnished. The new part will look out over the terrace and will be light and airy with large windows and at the same time will retain the snug feel that the current Bar has. Again this may cause some interruption in bar facilities whilst work is in progress but if necessary we will set up a dispense bar elsewhere in the hotel to keep the drinks flowing.

THE “OLD GENTS” READING ROOM

Last year I wrote that there was the possibility of moving my office into the “Old Gentleman’s”. At that time any extension of the Bar was to be in the direction of my office. Happily for me I am not going to be evicted and instead there is the opportunity to make an interesting additional facility out of the old gents. Exactly what form the change will take is not fully decided but it will add light, space and variation to the long corridor and more seating as an overflow from the bar or as a small lounge/reading room.

FACILITIES FOR THE DISABLED

Finally, those less able bodied guests will have their own facility within the hotel and not across the road in Darfield House as has been the case up until now. They will share this with the very youngest Wentworth guests as the Baby Changing unit will remain in this room.

BEDROOMS

The rolling programme of refurbishing bedrooms will continue as it has done every year. In 2008 Rooms 7,1,13 and 34 are due for treatment in addition the programme of refurbishing every bathroom is nearing completion. One more year should do it.....and then its back to square one

SPECIAL OFFERS BY EMAIL – CAN YOU AFFORD TO MISS OUT?

Apart from the special offers listed elsewhere in the Newsletter there are occasions throughout the year when there are some very good last minute offers available and which, through pressure of time, can only be communicated to you by email. For example during August we were able to offer two night breaks from £99.00 per person! Winter rates in summer months! Needless to say the response was very good and whilst we benefited with additional bookings, those recipients of the offer who were able to be flexible with their holiday arrangements, benefited as well.

If you would like to be kept informed of last minute offers, just go to our website, www.wentworth-aldeburgh.com, click on special offers and enter your email address.

BIGGER VALUE BREAKS IN NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER

12.5% DISCOUNT ON 5 NIGHT MIDWEEK BREAKS – SAVE AS MUCH AS £116.25 PER ROOM

Sometimes two or three night breaks are not quite long enough. But if you arrive on a Sunday and depart on the following Friday morning, a stay of five nights, you can obtain a reduction of 12.5% on dinner inclusive terms. This offer is available between November 4th and December 21st and is based on the two night break tariff. Over five nights you could make a saving of between £77.50 to £116.25 based on the two night rate for two persons sharing a twin or double room and depending on room type.

S T R E T C H

Your Weekend break by adding either Thursday or Sunday, or both, for just £42.50 per person per night inclusive of Dinner Bed and full English breakfast(Excluding Christmas and New Year)

CHRISTMAS SHOPPING BREAK

****ANY 3 MIDWEEK NIGHTS FOR THE PRICE OF 2****

Christmas shopping can be both relaxed and enjoyable when you combine a short break at the Wentworth with frequent forays to downtown Aldeburgh. There you will discover a hugely diverse selection of shops – clothes, high fashion to boutique, bookshops, music shop, galleries with pricey works, galleries with “affordable” pieces, accessory shops for the home and garden. All these, in addition to the traditional shops which used to be found in every high street, and which are still to be found in Aldeburgh. Our Offer saves you the cost of one night’s accommodation with Breakfast.

****THE OFFER****

Stay with us for three nights on Bed and Breakfast terms between Sunday and Thursday in December and pay just for two nights. The only condition we make is that you have dinner with us on at least one night

This offer is available between December 2nd and December 19th inclusive

WINE TASTING DINNER THURSDAY 22ND NOVEMBER

Following on from the success of the summer wine tasting lunch, Jolyon invites you to join Steve Parsons, senior wine buyer for Adnams wine merchants of Southwold and himself, for what promises to be an entertaining evening of lively conversation, good food and interesting wines.

We have reserved the Tiffany Garden room for this evening and the guest list will be limited to 18 in number on one large table.

Tickets are £42.00 per guest and include a Champagne welcome, a four course dinner with wines chosen by Steve Parsons. If you have any special dietary requirements please inform us at the time of booking.

STAY THE NIGHT ON A SPECIAL RATE.

Guests wishing to stay the night can take advantage of a 30% discount on Bed and Breakfast rates.

FESTIVE LUNCHESES & DINNERS IN DECEMBER

Christmas is a time for family and friends and the Wentworth festive lunches and dinners are ideal occasions for a get together. A glass of mulled wine sets the tone followed by a festive menu with crackers and seasonal table decorations. A pianist gently playing carols in the background adds that Christmas touch.

Dates for your diary:

Festive lunches. December 12th & 18th. £21.50 per person

Festive dinners: December 13th & 19th £24.50 per person

CHRISTMAS DINNER DANCES

Bring your party to our party! If you are looking for a little more than a quiet evening by the fireside we have five nights for you to dance the night away to Brian Nickels and his discotheque.

Dinner Dance nights: December 14th, 15th, 20th, 21st and 22nd.

CHRISTMAS

Join us for a relaxed and informal Christmas where good food, wine and conversation are to be enjoyed.*

	3 day	4 day
Smaller Inland	£470.00	£550.00
Smaller Sea view	£510.00	£590.00
Larger Sea view	£540.00	£620.00
Superior Sea view	£570.00	£650.00
Darfield House	£495.00	£570.00

The terms are per person for a 3 or 4 day Christmas break and include
Afternoon tea, dinner and Breakfast on each day
Lunch on Christmas day and Boxing Day

*At the time of writing the hotel is fully booked for Christmas but you are welcome to join the waiting list as cancellations do happen.

NEW YEAR

31st December 2007 – 2nd January 2008

A two or three night break with a New Years Eve Dance

	2 Day	3 Day
Smaller Inland	£270.00	£350.00

Smaller Sea view	£300.00	£380.00
Larger Sea view	£325.00	£405.00
Superior Sea view	£350.00	£430.00
Darfield House	£285.00	£365.00

Terms are per person and include: Breakfast and Dinner on each day with a dinner dance on New Years Eve

IN BETWEEN CHRISTMAS & NEW YEAR

27th -30th December 2007 – a time for relaxing days away after Christmas and before New Year.

	Bed & Breakfast	Dinner Bed & Breakfast
Smaller Inland	£67.00	£77.00
Smaller Sea view	£79.00	£89.00
Larger Sea view	£85.00	£95.00
Superior Sea view	£95.00	£105.00
Darfield House	£75.00	£85.00

The rates are per person per night

Bed and Breakfast rates include breakfast

Dinner ,Bed and Breakfast rates include Breakfast and dinner

OCTOBER

Breakaways (midweek and weekend) 2007 – Dinner, Bed and Breakfast (minimum two nights)

	Midweek	Weekend
Single inland	£91.00	£96.00
Single Sea view	£99.00	£104.00
Smaller Inland double	£78.00	£83.00
Smaller Sea view	£88.00	£93.00
Larger Sea view	£94.00	£99.00
Superior Sea view	£106.00	£111.00
Darfield House	£82.00	£87.00

All terms are per person per night

NOVEMBER & DECEMBER

Breakaways (midweek and weekend) 2007 – Dinner Bed and Breakfast (minimum two nights)

	Midweek 2 nights	Midweek 3-4 nights	Weekend
Single inland	£ 82.00	£ 77.00	£87.00
Single sea view	£87.00	£82.00	£92.00
Smaller inland double	£62.00	£57.00	£67.00
Smaller sea view double	£73.00	£68.00	£78.00

Larger sea view double	£83.00	£78.00	£88.00
Superior sea view double	£93.00	£88.00	£98.00
Darfield house	£69.00	£65.00	£75.00

All terms are per person per night