

BEAVERBROOK

Press Coverage

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'Guinea pig - often mentioned as a sly joke - is low in fat and exceedingly moreish'
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Travel on Sunday

WEEKENDERS

HOTEL HIT SQUAD MARK C O'FLAHERTY



MEET THE TEAM
Fiona Duncan, our long-standing hotel reviewer; man about town Mark C O'Flaherty; twentysomething globetrotter Shelle Jacobs; and family travel expert Hattie Garlick

Once home to a press baron, Beaverbrook is a big-budget country house hotel serving up a fantasy England

What does "English" look like? In these tricky times for both question and possible answers, the

latest chapter in the story of Beaverbrook - built as Cherkley Court in the late 19th century and, famously, the home of press baron and first Minister of Aircraft Production Lord Beaverbrook - offers a few feel-good suggestions.

As someone who, when overseas, always answers the question "Are you... British?" with "No, I'm a Londoner", I was surprised how taken I was with Beaverbrook's rural, Home Counties nostalgia. If Soho Farmhouse is Center Parcs for East London stylists, this is something more sophisticated. I don't want my flat in Hackney to look anything like Beaverbrook, but I was more than happy to holiday in its floral textiles and wallpapers.

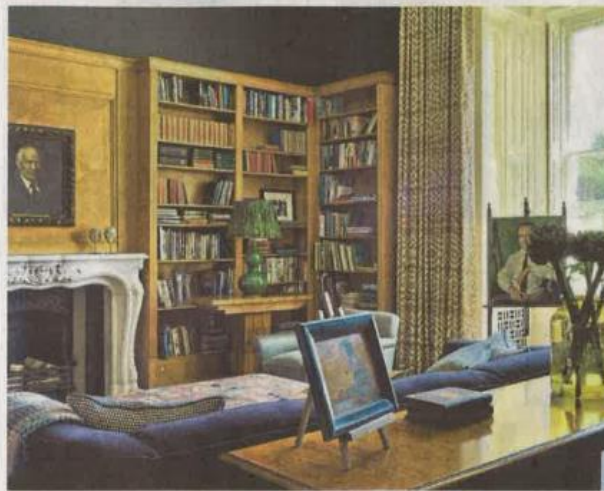
The interiors, by Susie Atkinson, display an authentically Victorian sensibility for jumbling things that shouldn't go together but do -

shagreen-surfaced bedside tables and lace lampshades; minibars decorated with seashells; Nicky Haslam textiles and Veere Grenney wallpaper. There is no overt "wow" factor at Beaverbrook, apart from perhaps the Rupert Bevan-constructed Twenties-style brass counter in the Parrot Bar, but that's the point: it's grand yet homely.

The main House and the more informal and family-friendly Garden House - originally built as an overspill property for Lord Beaverbrook's guests - opened earlier this year, and both have bedrooms. A spa block will open in spring 2018. The golf club is already here; its fees are rumoured to be in excess of £100,000 (Surrey is nothing if not moneyed) and there is zero access for anyone other than members. Beaverbrook guests are unlikely to even know it exists.

I stayed in the Dowager Suite in the House (from £950 per night), which has a giant freestanding tub next to a terrace with views across the Surrey Hills. On a bright autumn afternoon, the vista resembled a lambent 18th-century oil painting. I spent two hours in that tub reading some particularly lurid true crime and drinking champagne, and wanted to stay longer. My bed was a plush four-poster and I could Bluetooth music and mirror my laptop to one of two purposely small but hi-tech TV sets. I also spent an afternoon watching Hitchcock classics in the art deco cinema that I'd reserved downstairs - once used by Churchill to catch up on Pathé news reels.

Beaverbrook has been put together with storyboards as much as swatches and designer sketches. Staff dress in cricket jumpers with knitted bow ties



and cloth caps - a touch *Toad of Toad Hall*, or Ralph Lauren does PG Wodehouse. A Spitfire emblem, a nod to the first Minister, appears on the staff's brooches, pressed into wasabi on sushi platters, and in a series of stained glass panels by Brian Clarke hanging in the House staircase. I love Clarke's work, but here it's literal, trite and lacks impact. More exciting is the huge Gerhard Richter tapestry in the same space - a hallucinatory Rorschach extravaganza.

Over at the Garden House restaurant there are botanical sketches and paintings of husbandry on the walls and a conservatory that looks out

onto a photogenic vegetable patch. I thought the food remarkable. A plate of ricotta gnocchi with lemon, sage and pistachio balanced opiate comfort with citrus zest and novelty, while hake cooked on a Jospier grill was simple, flavourful and lush. At the next table, a woman in her 70s appeared agog at her molten chocolate pudding. "It's hot inside!" she exclaimed, as if discovering sorcery.

The Garden House is less formal, and my meal was accompanied by the low-level whine of little people - my Room 101 soundtrack. A PR once accidentally copied me into an email to colleagues after coffee at The Wolseley: "He's edgy, dislikes children but loves a macaron." Only the last part was untrue. I like the colours at Ladurée, but lack a sweet tooth.

Children aren't permitted in the Japanese Grill after 7pm, so that's where I went next. This is the wild card at Beaverbrook. The food, by Nobu alumni Taiji Maruyama, was as good as anything I've eaten in Osaka, but I wonder if the restaurant will work here long term. I hope it does, although ladies who thrill to chocolate fondant might not appreciate sea bass nigiri covered in crispy ants.

Japanese Grill aside, Beaverbrook is a fantasy England crafted with a big budget and a good art director - luxe chintz, Penguin paperbacks, crystal tumblers, Evelyn Waugh and gin and tonics. It's a fabulously well-scripted, escapist fantasy. I loved it.

Rooms from £330 not including breakfast. There is one room in the House with full disabled access. For more hotels in Surrey, see: telegraph.co.uk/tt-surreyhotels

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