

The Dorchester's Irish custodian

Fiona Audley speaks to John Scanlon, who has found his calling as manager of one of London's most prestigious hotels

NOTHING says luxury like the lobby of The Dorchester — and with Christmas around the corner it's about to undergo an impressive transformation to bring a slice of the festive season to the 81-year-old business.

In typically spectacular style the hotel's festive theme for 2012 is set to feature a five-foot replica of the iconic Park Lane landmark made entirely out of gingerbread, thanks to the creative hand and penchant for detail of hotel manager John Scanlon.

"It's all about the detail," the Co.

Kerry native, who heads up operations at the vast 250-bed venue which has loomed luxuriously on the Mayfair skyline for decades, assured The Irish Post. "Those special elements that make all the difference at The Dorchester."

With responsibilities for up to 1,000 staff who could be onsite at any one time and more than 1,200 guests and residents potentially milling around the 1930s art deco-inspired building, it's fair to say the role is a vocation rather than a job.

In fact when we met Mr Scanlon, a graduate of the Shannon College of Hotel Management, it appeared to be much more of a calling — one that continues to 'excite' him after years working for the hotel's parent company the Dorchester Collection.

"As hotel manager I have responsibilities for everything really," he told us.

"From the day to-day management of the hotel, including looking to the future and planning for it, to the strategic side of the business, looking at demand and supply and how we are pacing and selling against that."

He added: "I love being involved in everything because you can get very excited about whether the rugs or carpets are right, whether you can do something new in housekeeping or how you can make things more comfortable from a guest's point of view. It's all about enriching the experience."

The long-term hotelier has worked solidly in London's Park Lane area in recent years, after moving to Britain upon his graduation from college in Co. Clare in 1985.

He told us why he has never ventured into any other field of employment.

"I don't know if you ever actually realise you want to do this type of work," he explained.

"I just always felt that the right fit for me was something involving helping people or helping resolve problems for people — I believe you should play to your strengths and that was a strength for me.

"Of course I didn't know that would be in a hotel context when I was 18, but I think it's been a fantastic context for me as it's diverse, changing all the time and it's a different experience every day."

That passion to help others saw the Listowel native take positions at Sheraton Skyline, Heathrow Airport



EXCITING ROLE: John Scanlon.

Dorchester facts

The Dorchester was built in 1931 on a site where British nobles had lived during the 18th and 19th centuries. Sir Robert McAlpine, vowing to create a luxury hotel that would "rank as the finest in Europe", bought the site with Gordon Hotels for £500,000 in 1929.

The Dorchester boasts 250 suites and rooms including 196 individually-designed guest bedrooms, 50 suites and three roof suites.

Its bars and restaurants include — Alain Ducasse at The Dorchester, China Tang and China Tang Bar, The Grill at The Dorchester, The Promenade and The Promenade Bar, The Spatisserie and The Bar at The Dorchester

The Dorchester serves up to 250 afternoon teas in its exquisite Promenade area every day.

For almost 80 years, The Dorchester has played host to the noble and noteworthy: Prince Philip hosted his bachelor's party on the eve of his wedding to Queen Elizabeth II in the hotel's Park Suite, while General Dwight D. Eisenhower planned the Normandy Invasion from his suite.

An endless flow of leaders and celebrities have been guests, from stars of the past like Gloria Swanson, Marlene Dietrich, Richard Burton and James Mason to today's headliners like Arnold Schwarzenegger, Tom Cruise, Meg Ryan and Nicole Kidman.



and Trusthouse Forte Hotels over the years, before moving onto The Lanesborough in Mayfair and ultimately making the exclusive step into the deluxe-luxe world of the Dorchester Collection in 2008.

But in March 2012 he was appointed as the prestigious venue's hotel manager, where his drive and dedication has seen him bring new heights to the opulence and experience on offer at The Dorchester.

"When you want to look after people, this is the place to do it," Mr Scanlon told us.

"This is a wonderful company to work for; there is a lot of resource behind the product and the brand and there is continuous investment into the property and it has this amazing heritage, which I am in awe of."

He explained: "When you mention The Dorchester people really sit up — it gets a different reaction. The 81-year heritage is what people love, the fact that it's been here that long and the fact that it has that connection with celebrity and glamour and luxury."

He added: "But ultimately it has delivered a consistently high level of service every year — I am passionate about that, as those before me have all been passionate about that down through the ages."

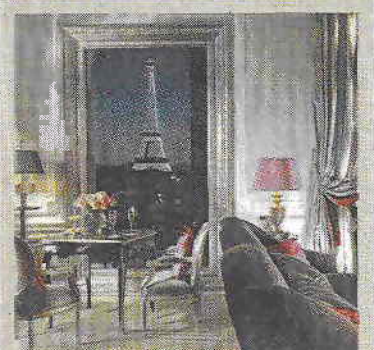
And the Irishman now at the helm has every intention of continuing that trend. He admitted: "It's an incredible honour to be given a hotel like The Dorchester to run."

"I have a duty of care to hand it on to the next person in the same condition I got it in, if not better, so that 20, 30 or 100 years from now The Dorchester will

be even more special, while continuing to run smoothly, as the well-oiled machine it is."

www.thedorchester.com

Dorchester Collection



The Dorchester Collection boasts the following properties worldwide:

- The Dorchester, London
- The Beverly Hills Hotel, Beverly Hills
- Le Meurice, Paris
- Hotel Plaza Athénée, Paris (pictured)
- Hotel Principe di Savoia, Milan
- Hotel Bel-Air, Los Angeles
- Coworth Park, Ascot, UK
- 45 Park Lane, London
- Le Richemond, Geneva

Fahy checks in for new role as CEO of Ellerman Hotels

BY FIONA AUDLEY

AFTER six successful years at The Cavendish in London, Irish hotelier Ciarán Fahy moves onwards and upwards in an exciting new role.

When Cavendish owners Ellerman Hotels sold the property to a Singapore investment company earlier this year, they were keen to retain the man whose industry expertise drove the popular venue to great success even amidst the economic downturn.

As the long-standing Jermyn Street hotel prepares for a makeover in 2014 — where it will be renamed and relaunched as luxury serviced apartments — the Dublin native is getting stuck in to his new role as CEO at Ellerman Hotels.

"In this new role I am responsible for all of Ellerman's hotel interests, which at the moment currently consists of The Ritz," he explained. "But they are always looking at future acquisitions, which I would

obviously play a role within."

He added: "Hotels are more complex than people sometimes realise, they don't operate with a conventional head office structure and my role is to advise and support the owners and indeed the hotels when decisions are made."

For Mr Fahy, who hails from Lucan and graduated from the Shannon College of Hotel Management, the role comes at an exciting time for the London hotel industry, which is apparently

experiencing a late Olympics boost, bucking all forecasts.

"For me the future for the industry is exciting and challenging," he told us.

"Interestingly every city that hosts an Olympics tends to have a lull post-Olympics, but London has bucked that trend. Hotels are generally growing in revenue."

"Part of that must be the benefit of London being showcased to the world, it was a very successful Games and London was on everyone's TV screens for five weeks — you

can't buy that publicity."

He added: "The Ritz has a hugely international market — it is an iconic hotel and has been for over a century — but there are always new markets opening up and new competition, so there are always new challenges."

"No matter how good you are and how well you operate you need to continue to push your business forward in terms of service delivery and physical product. You can't take your success from the last century for granted."



EXCITING FUTURE: Ciarán Fahy.