



**Celebrating
60 years of
“Hospitality”**

Ten years ago in 1997 the Langstone Cliff Hotel reached its Fiftieth anniversary and we produced a modest 12 page leaflet with pictures and a brief history of the hotel. And here we are – ten years on – 2007 – our Sixtieth Anniversary!

“This calls for a new pamphlet”, “You could write a book”, “What about the time that.....”

These are typical and oft repeated comments from regular visitors to the hotel. Well in truth, I could not write a book. I just do not have the skills or the dedication to undertake such a task, and if I were to go down the “What about the time that.....” route, the lawyers would have a field day! But a new pamphlet.... Well perhaps we ought. At least on this occasion it is not starting from scratch. We have the 1997 version as a basis.

We planned and presented three anniversary weekends in 1997 and the thought was that we would distribute our “mini history book” to the guests that attended



those weekends, and maybe have a few extra for anyone that may be interested. No in-house colour copying in those days –

indeed colour printing was still comparatively expensive and we eventually settled for a 2500 print run. They absolutely flew out the door! Since then we have acquired the facility to reproduce them in-house and do so with amazing regularity. At a guess I would say we have produced about 10,000.

Re-reading the ten year old “best-seller” I do not believe there is much that I would alter, so why re-invent the wheel? Let us just create a supplement to cover the last ten years.



1997 – 2007

In 1999 – We put together a “Major Improvements Plan” which we anticipated would take us five years to complete – and indeed it did. But of course with hotels, and indeed many other businesses, when you have completed that which you planned five years ago – it is time to do it all again! And with the amazing advances in technology that we are all expected to (or try to, or “sod it!”) Keep up with, whatever we did five years ago is decidedly old hat! But now I am really talking like an old man – let’s get back to the script.

4th July 1998 was a big day on the Family front. Mark married Cathy Leicester, here in the hotel with the usual high jinks to follow. Cathy came complete with three teenage daughters Jos, Wendy and Caroline so the family increased by four at a stroke!

The Washington Ballroom, in use virtually every weekend, gave us a window of opportunity in August 1999 when two weddings, back to back, cancelled and we jumped at the chance to give the ballroom and bar its first major overhaul – new air-conditioning, sophisticated lighting, new ceiling, re-style and redecorate – and all in less



than three weeks. Another nail-biter – but achieved!

With the benefit of hind-sight, October 1999 was a gigantic leap in the way we market the hotel. We created our first website. Whilst a little slow to start with, the internet is now responsible for bringing us a huge proportion of our business. The poolside wing was built in 1972, the Washington Suite in 1976 and the indoor pool complex in 1980 and although they had obviously been “tweaked”, painted and decorated and so on we felt 1999 was time for a big change to leap into the new century. All the Washington and poolside bedrooms were completely gutted, bathrooms rebuilt, new ceilings, new lighting, furniture, carpet, bedding - absolutely total refurbishment for a total of 32 bedrooms – no mean task.

The indoor pool came in for similar





treatment, only the hole with the water and the tiling remained.

The plant

room was stripped, new technology introduced, new ceiling, new lighting. The old changing rooms and toilets were ripped out and the whole complex extended to include a small gym, therapy room, hairdressing salon and of course new and greatly improved toilet and changing facilities.

The whole poolside wing re-opened on the 23rd December – and we were full for Christmas! I am not sure who was the most amazed – us or the builders!



2000 – Millennium Year. Do you remember the hype that led up to New Year’s Eve 1999? But the world kept spinning, the computers didn’t collapse – even the clock kept time – so what was all that about? Anyway, we had a wonderful New Year’s Eve celebration and early in January all the staff that had worked on that evening were taken to London to see the Millennium Dome.

Work continued throughout 2000 and 2001 on those bedrooms that had not

had “the treatment” in 1999.



2001 – Another massively busy year! In the Spring a new snooker room and “cellar” (beer storage) to serve the Lincoln Bar was built. The existing snooker table was moved to it’s new location and the old snooker room altered to create increased office accommodation and the Tourist Information Centre. The Main Entrance Hall and Lincoln Bar were stripped to the bone and completely restyled. In the Autumn the Garden Room, Verandah

Room, Lounges, Drawing Room, Poolside Room and Woodland Room were all refurbished and redecorated, with air conditioning introduced to the Verandah, Lounge and Drawing Room.



2002 – The pace did not slacken! Early in the year (when the weather

was appalling!) We remodelled the whole of the sea-facing front of the hotel at first floor level. Probably the most technically difficult of all the alterations we have undertaken. The equivalent of demolishing and



rebuilding two good sized bungalows thirty foot up in the air, above a two hundred and fifty year old listed building which was occupied and working! Five front facing rooms became four much larger ones, three back facing rooms disappeared altogether, and it all happened in just five weeks! Builders or magicians!? Never at any time, through this or any part of our improvement programme, did the hotel close. Certainly we had a few hairy moments – flooded



lounges (twice), total blackouts (almost daily!), feet through ceilings

and so on, but, with hind sight we were certainly blessed through this particular phase of our “Major Improvements”.



2002/3 – In the Autumn of 2002 the improvements continued apace – much of it back of house. An open yard was covered, which meant very considerable roofing work to re-route rainwater, to create a new much improved staircase to match the front-of-house staircase and replace the daunting single flight which had been in place since the sixties. A new guest laundry was added, a staff dining room, new improved staff changing facilities and toilets, additional food storage and cold rooms and a vastly improved goods received area. And one additional hotel bedroom. This was a very ambitious chunk that effectively re-



designed the west-facing facade of the hotel – and oh what an improvement! Due to be completed March/April 2003 it had rolled on into the summer months. The final task was to be the resurfacing of the drive and car parks



– and this took place in early August in some of the hottest weather on record. Hotelier’s nightmare! I shiver as I think of it. But we have survived to tell the tale – and the drive looked as if it was draped in black velvet when it was finished!

2003 – Autumn 2003 the programme rolled on. All the bungalow rooms were up-dated. Restaurant and Lincoln Bar were re-carpeted and re-furnished – the selection of 420 new chairs became a project on its own!

2004 – The Washington Conservatory was added, the Washington Foyer up dated, automatic doors introduced, special toilet for disabled guests added, both ladies



and gents completely re-designed and considerable investment in new kitchen equipment.

The Major Improvements programme

introduced in 1999 had all its boxes ticked, five years on, as planned.



Do we heave a big sigh and lean back? Not a bit of it.

2005 – The Washington Foyer and Toilets had been updated and looked good – so it had to be the turn of the Lincoln Loos – and we are very pleased with these too.

2005 – Wi-Fi Broadband introduced to the hotel, a huge boost to our conference business and of course now used by many of our guests for both business and leisure purposes. Still on the technical front, our website was given a major overhaul in November 2005.

Two of our family suites have been re-thought and now have extra-smart bathrooms and of course some of the rooms

tackled at the beginning of our 1999 programme are ready for another face lift – the wheels never stop turning.

2005– As this chronology gets closer to the present time, the memories remain more vivid – none more so than the night of the 15th June 2005. We had an enormous thunderstorm; one particular clap of thunder was without doubt the loudest noise I have ever experienced. The

hotel didn't like it much either – surface water rushed through the Washington Ballroom and bar, the kitchens, service and wash-up areas. The hard surface floors survived with a clean-up but the maple-strip ballroom floor and all the carpeted areas were ruined and had to be replaced, 17 TV sets were rendered useless, our old – but thoroughly efficient baby listening system was mortally wounded (and proved incredibly



difficult to replace, as it happens – strange considering the enormous advances in technology that there have been). The fire alarms system sounded its

last alarm – and died. Five brand new computerised registers gave us eight days service, and were then consigned to the skip. The computer system which looks after reservations gave us problems, but thankfully did not

expire completely – perish the thought! And the eye of the storm had passed within thirty minutes – but what chaos it caused. For all the services to be restored completely took months, but we limped along with wonderfully understanding guests and virtually all of our support engineers and technicians co-operated to the full, to at least keep us

running. But the two most important









services of all continued throughout – the bar never closed and the kitchen did not stop producing!

August 2006 – With the brand new maple dance floor installed in the Washington Ballroom and the carpets in the Washington Bar and Ballroom replaced following the floods the previous year. The newness of the flooring gave the rest of the furnishings a slightly tired feel. Time for change! Curtains replaced in the ballroom, (miles of them!), new ceiling in the bar, new light fittings, new furniture, new mirrors, new pictures, in fact a complete change of image. The orders were placed in late July or August

with thoughts of an October opening. The British carpets and flooring – delivered and fitted on time – hoorah! Spanish light fittings – eight weeks delivery. Italian furniture promised in six weeks, took sixteen! So our

October new bar made it just in time for Christmas 2006 – or, which is what we really thought, just in time for our 60th Anniversary Year!



2007 – March 3rd – Another milestone in the saga of the “Rogers Family at the Langstone”. Suzy married Jem Squires here at the hotel. Whilst we all had a wonderful time, the event did not get quite the publicity we expected as it fell on the same day as Liz Hurley’s marriage to Arun

Nayar. Ah well! And we thought we had thought of everything!

And here we are bang up to date and looking forward to welcoming as many as possible of our regular guests and friends to a total of four Anniversary Weekends as we progress through 2007.

Well there you have a potted history of the hotel over the last ten years, but what of the personalities?

“The Family” as we are usually referred to (we used to think this was mildly complimentary and friendly but I have never been quite so confident since I once heard that the Mafia were sometimes known by this same collective noun!) Is still all working here at the hotel. An often repeated crack of mine that “none of us could find a proper job” still holds true.

There is currently a vogue to call employees anything but “staff”. They have become “the team”, “the workforce” “personnel” “employees” even “human resources” ugh!! What-ever is wrong with



“staff”? A staff is also a stave, a stick or prop – to assist, to strengthen, to give confidence. So here at the Langstone we are especially proud of our “staff”! We are currently a team of 93 real people giving service 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. No one “lives-in”, all live locally, all speak English and seventeen have been with us fifteen years or more.

The current heads of department are Dawn Konetsky, housekeeping – with a staggering 39 years of service. Jenny Green – Restaurant (19 years) Jane Jones – Restaurant (25 years) Valerie Santer – Reception (20 years) Gary Herridge – Kitchen (17 years) Suzy Squires – Back Office and Finance (4 weeks – but I suppose we had better count the previous 19 years as a Rogers!) Louise Attwood – Wedding Co-ordinator, Reception, Back Office and Family (19 years) and James Cousins – Bar (the new kid on the block – 7 years).

Special mention must also be made of the remaining “lifers” who have also served such huge sentences here at the Langstone – Nigel Cobley

(odd job – 34 years) Sue Rabbage – Restaurant (25 years), Sandra Foster – Restaurant (23 years) Ray Eveleigh – Bar and formerly nights (19 years) Vicky Rogers – Bar, Restaurant and Family of course (19 years) Florence Kennedy – Bar (19 years) Simon Rogers – Maintenance and Family (17 years) Gary Attwood – Kitchen, husband of Louise and also, obviously family (14 years), Cathy Rogers- Waitress then Therapist and yet another family member, married to Mark (12 years). I could of course go on until I had mentioned all 93 – and in many ways I should like to, but let me make just a few more “mentions” Dave Thomas – kitchen – 2nd Chef, Anne Mockeridge – assistant house keeper, Ray Hoyle and Steve Scrivens – Nights, Morag Trainer and Pam White – Restaurant, Katie Woodley – Hairdresser, Kerri Attwood – Housekeeping (6 months) Grand-daughter and the fourth Langstone generation!



What a luxury to have such loyal staff – I am sure we are the envy of many hotels, on this front at least.

A huge thank you to them all, the mentioned and the unmentioned, – without whom – all of them – it just doesn’t work!

Looking back over the sixty years the hotel has been in existence there are inevitably changes galore – the physical changes we have largely already described, but we have also lived through, coped with, survived – however you care to phrase it, a



whole range of business challenges.

The earliest hotels or inns were not thought of as recreational centres – they were essential stops for stage-coaches where both passengers and horses were rested and refreshed. The coming of the railway took the horses out of the equation, reduced travelling times and hotels that offered greater comforts began to become destinations rather than just “stop-overs”. Holidays at hotels, indeed holidays at all, were very much for the upper echelon of society. However the railways were becoming more affordable for everyday folk, they

carried day-trippers to the seaside and slowly hotels started to appear at resorts and spa towns. The Second World War stifled the growth but come 1945, the lights started to come back on and this is round about where the Rogers Family entered the hotel scene, opening the Langstone Cliff Hotel on the 30th March 1947. In those days there were 24 hotels in and around Dawlish. We are now virtually the sole survivor.

In the late forties and through to the mid sixties the hotel trade here in Dawlish was just about 100% leisure trade – family holidays. Business travel was comparatively unheard of here in deepest South Devon. The hotel used to open for Easter and close again at the end of September. We might present the odd function or two during the winter months and occasionally accommodate a few guests that attended such events. In



the early fifties we did start opening for Christmas – but it would be a four-day wonder – not even remaining open for the New Year's Eve revellers.

The hotel grew, but comparatively slowly until 1962 when the Lincoln

Ballroom was built and some 22 bedrooms added. We then became too large a property and too expensive to maintain twelve months of the year, with just six months income! The newly built Lincoln Ballroom, we called it the Principal prior to arrival of the Washington Ballroom, was miles and away the largest function suite in Dawlish and also attracted a lot of business from other nearby towns, notably Exeter. The function business grew, this attracted weekend accommodation, and leisure weekends were also beginning to come into fashion. More and more business people needed to stay away mid week and somewhere around the late



sixties, we decided to keep the hotel open throughout the year – and have not closed since!

As now, even in January, our quietest month, we managed to average 63 guests per night and in August, the busiest month, the average was 176, including children of course.

The opening of the Washington Ballroom in 1976 opened many more doors for the presentation of functions, dance holidays of all types, short mat bowls breaks, conferences, training events and not least, our own Special Cabaret weekends. These weekends have become a major part of the hotel programme bringing in business at all times of the year. They provide a pleasing two/three day break that have an almost club like feel about them. So many of our guests and friends visit us regularly for these events that it would be almost impossible not to meet up with someone you know, and that means the “sociabilities” start just about immediately! No “warming up” or “settling in” period. And now the Christmas and New Year period has transformed from the “four-day wonder” described earlier to just about the busiest fortnight of the year.



But what happened to the family holiday concept that the business was built upon? Oh, that has not gone away – but we have to admit that a series of factors is squeezing the family holidays into the school holiday format. It does not seem an awful long time ago that children started school at 5 years of age, so families with younger children would visit in the Spring and Autumn months. Now children are at nursery school or pre-school not long after they can walk! Mum goes out to work, school threatens with fines

should you dare to take the children away for a few days break during term-times, and so on, and so on.

But this is meant to be a light hearted look over the shoulder at 60 years of hospitality here at the Langstone. Not a social comment!



Over - all the business goes from strength to strength – thanks to you, our loyal and regular guests. We say

“Long may it continue” – we just
hope you do too!

Finally I feel I cannot find words more

sincere than those I used ten years
ago to conclude the little brochure we
produced to celebrate the culmination
of fifty years here at the Langstone.

***“But after all these words and pictures, celebrations
and parties what would our hotel be without you
– our regular guests and friends?”***

You are the really important ingredient,

You create the atmosphere,

You make the fun and

You leave the memories.

Thank you all so very much.”





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