

HISTORY OF JERMYN STREET

Was, and probably still is considered to be the most distinguished gentlemen's streets of London. It dates back to the year 1664 in the reign of Charles II of England, Henry Jermyn – the Earl of St. Albans – handed the deeds to develop the land near the St. James's Palace, thus to become a street to which he gave his name. The whole elegant Royal area became known as St James's.

Jermyn Street from the turn of the century was exclusively a domain of aristocratic English gentleman, with its famous clubs, (many of which have now disappeared) and with its shops of beautiful clothing and very requisite for the discerning gentleman. Many of the shops to this day still retain their old charm and distinction and are famous throughout the world, not only for their Royal patronage, but for the style of true British old world elegance. One of the great interest is a minute shop celebrated for gentleman's hats. Many years ago its famous tatty cat called "Blinks" used to sit in the window superciliously watching the passers-by, he wore a tiny top hat and held a cigarette in his mouth epitomizing one of the shop's many patrons. He still can be seen preserved in his glass case home inside the shop, looking as wise as ever.

Probably the most famous establishment was, of course, the "old" Cavendish Hotel owned by Rosa Lewis, and affectionately nicknamed Rosa's. One writes "old" because sadly it has been re-built as a modern hotel. Rosa's was in those former days frequented only by rich young men of London Society, where many champagne parties and lively conversation took place, always-presided over by Rosa Lewis in person. There are many stories about this amazing personality and of how she acquired this prestigious property.

London suffered in the bombing of World War II – Jermyn Street no less. In 1940 a landmine devastated part of the street, many old historic buildings being lost forever; including the well known Hamaan Turkish Baths. The beautiful St James's Church, built by Sir Christopher Wren, was badly damaged that same night of October 14th by a heavy bomb and gutted by incendiaries. The ancient bells and steeple were lost, to be replaced eventually. This fashionable church has been restored gradually as funds permitted.

The present site of a well-known shop was, before the war, occupied by the London Geological Museum protecting a glorious array of rare opals and other semi precious stones from all parts of the world.. The museum has moved to another area.

And so, in spite of the Winds of Change, this lovely old street has endeavored to retain some of its old charm and dignity – and – who knows if Henry Jermyn's and maybe even also the ghost of Charles II walking around St James's would nod their heads in approval that their land has been honored, always.