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## Great Scotland Yard

### LONDON

Hyatt's Unbound Collection makes its UK debut, with a narrative by EPR Architects and HBA that aims to unlock secrets of London's past.

Words: Catherine Martin  
Photography: Courtesy of Hyatt  
(unless otherwise stated)

Once the home of the Metropolitan Police, Great Scotland Yard is synonymous with law and order. The street – a 150m thoroughway between Whitehall and Northumberland Avenue – was little more than a courtyard between buildings back in the 1800s, but its surroundings are steeped in history; it was here that the crimes of Britain's most notorious villains were investigated, from the violent heists of West End gangs to the grisly murders of Jack the Ripper.

Although The Met's original headquarters actually only backed on to Great Scotland Yard – its entrance was around the corner on Whitehall – the two became so intrinsically linked that the moniker continues to this day, despite the force vacating the site over a century ago. It's this association that informs the identity of the street's new resident, a 152-key hotel from Hyatt's collection brand.

As one of a new wave of properties that champions individuality, Great Scotland Yard joins Chicago Athletic Association in Illinois,

Nam Nghi in Phu Quoc and Hôtel du Louvre in Paris as a member of The Unbound Collection. Each has its own narrative, manifested in the architecture and design or the services and experiences on offer. In London, that narrative has been brought to life by EPR Architects and HBA, and with the site's storied past, there's certainly no shortage of tales to tell.

The hotel occupies an Edwardian building from 1910, originally built as an army recruitment office and more recently used by the Ministry of Defence. Its transformation into a hotel has been a lengthy one, taking almost a decade from start to finish. During that time there were additional planning applications to be made and a change in ownership, but with plenty of experience in converting London landmarks into luxury hotels, EPR Architects took it all in their stride. On board from the very beginning, the team were responsible for the architectural conversion of the building, restoring the façade to its former glory, defining a new internal layout and adding a rooftop extension.





FF&F throughout Great Scotland Yard has been thoughtfully selected from a host of international brands, including lighting from Chubb, bathroom fittings from Lofby Brooks, furniture by Porada and fabrics from P/Kaufmann.

Dubai-based Lulu Group International - stepping in with fresh investment. Various brands were rumored to have shown interest but it was H&M that triumphed, bringing The Unbound Collection to the UK for the first time. For the interiors, Twenty2 appointed M&A, with David T'Hire, Partner of the newly-formed M&A studio taking the lead. "We were challenged to keep the soul of the building and pay homage to its heritage rather than just bringing new life to old walls," he explains. "Our design team created a destination that invites guests to experience the rich history of the building through new eyes as they enter a place where the past and present merge, to journey through various aspects of local culture, unlocking the secrets of the storied Great Scotland Yard along the way."

The anecdotes begin in the entrance hall, where a 150kg clock crafted from glass and stainless steel hangs overhead. Made by Proless, the installation shows the inner mechanisms of the clock and the perpetual time of 6pm - the time in Alice's Adventures in Wonderland. If you're wondering about the connection to Great Scotland Yard, the book's author, Lewis Carroll, was hauled in for questioning by the

detective unit that once occupied this site, as a suspect in the hunt for Jack the Ripper.

The crime theme continues in the lobby lounge, where an artwork by Nicola Green - part of a 600-strong collection curated by Hollandsridge Group - features mugshots of characters associated with the area, from gangsters and criminals to prominent judges and police personnel. Elsewhere, an installation by prison charity Kestler Arts showcases the works of serving offenders: a cabinet of memorabilia displays police helmets through the ages, and paintings by Brazilian artist Julio Alan Lopes bring a touch of humour to quintessential British icons.

At the heart of the hotel, The Forty Elephants tells the story of an all-female crime syndicate known for its skill in dodging police detention. Set beneath a central lightwell, the cocktail bar features a chandelier of broken glass, designed by Lavit to represent the smash-and-grab crimes of the gang, while a stylised portrait of The Bob Mated Bandit - aka accomplice Lillian Rose Goldstein - hangs over the fireplace.

While meanwhile is a secret whiskey bar concealed behind a door disguised as bookshelves, the kind

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of glass you might expect illicit whisperings over a single malt. Whiskey-filled display cabinets divide the space into three seating areas, while a rich palette of distressed timber flooring, oak panelling and copper detail creates a speakeasy feel to accompany a ceiling installation of 4,000 glass bottles.

"The building has such a rich and colourful history, it was imperative that we capture its legacy and heritage," says T'Kint of the eclectic series of spaces that make up the food and beverage offer. "Our inspiration came from the architecture and location; the area has hosted so many important 'gusts' so their stories were woven into the design too."

In a departure from the law and order theme, The Parlour draws on Britain's explorative past and transports guests to the West Indies with tropical prints and wicker furniture, while The Yard – curated by chef Robin Gill – is reminiscent of a country estate. Vaulted ceilings and exposed brickwork set the scene for a changing menu of modern British fare, devoted around local micro-farmers and their produce.

Guestrooms come in a variety of shapes and sizes, adding to the bespoke feel of the hotel. "Corner rooms

and those up in the eaves are particularly special" – and there's also a five-storey Georgian townhouse next door that serves as a standalone suite. Interiors follow a pared-back scheme with a neutral colour palette and high-quality materials, though on closer inspection there's subtle touches that reference the history of the building and its surroundings; nightstands are finished in a shade of blue veneer synonymous with the British police force; wardrobes are concealed behind a false bookcase in a nod to the MCD library that was once located here; robe hooks are shaped as keys; and artworks see the iconic police helmet transformed into a graphic pattern and embellished with gold leaf.

The narrative touches every aspect of the property from the logo to the uniforms – a sophisticated take on the jailbird stripe; in fact Great Scotland Yard has enough stories to fill an entire book. For those who've worked on the project, there's a palpable sense of pride, one that's shared by the owners, who had close involvement in the final product and a passion for creating a hotel that relates to its locale. It's fair to say they've succeeded.



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 Operator: Hyatt  
 Architects: EPR Architects  
 Interior Design: HBA  
 Brand Strategy: Birch  
 Graphic Design: Imaginative  
 Lighting Design: Illuminix, LEDline  
 Uniform Design: Studio 34  
 Art Consultant: Hollmbridge Group  
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