

Family and Fortune

It's not always as great as you might think to inherit your parents' business, as hoteliers across the UK confess

WHILE SETTING UP A HOTEL BUSINESS from scratch is tough, what if all the hard graft has been done for you? What if it's your turn to take over the reins from your father or mother?

Is it easier being a second-generation hotelier, or is the pressure more intense because you've got to win the trust and respect of your parents, staff and guests, as well as making sure the business continues to succeed and evolve?

It - *The Hotel Magazine* has been speaking to second, third and even fourth-generation hoteliers about their experiences, and picking up a few tips along the way on how to prevent a big family fall-out...



"I FOUGHT AGAINST IT FOR A LONG TIME"

Andrew Beale is the managing director of Beales Hotels and the third generation of hotelkeepers in his family. His office at West

Lodge Park in Hadley Wood, Hertfordshire, used to be his grandfather's dining room.

"My grandfather, Edward, bought West Lodge Park in 1945 and lived on-site, making himself constantly available to everybody," Andrew says.

"He used to come down to the hotel restaurant for breakfast every morning, always dressed in suit and tie, because that's what staff and guests expected."

When Andrew's father Trevor started working at West Lodge Park in 1957, he "swore he would bring up his family away from the hotel so he wouldn't feel under that constant pressure". Andrew followed



Handed down: West Lodge Park in Hertfordshire, run by the Beale family for more than 60 years

suit, and lives 45 minutes away with his wife and five children.

He joined the family business at 29 as general manager at West Lodge Park, after doing a geography degree, going to hotel school in Switzerland, and spending five years working for various hotel companies. "I fought against it for a long time because when you go into a family business, that's it, you can't very easily leave.

"I don't think I was ever seen by the staff as a shoo-in - some incompetent boy who's the son of the owner - because I'd worked elsewhere and gained lots of experience," says Andrew, 44.

"I think that's the only formula for succession - get the next generation to go off into the outside world and find out what real hotel companies are doing before considering coming into the family business at all."

As a third-generation hotelier - and the eighth generation to run the Beale family business, which started out as a bakery and catering firm in 1769 - Andrew believes he's under less pressure than first-time hoteliers like his grandfather. "There's the pressure to continue the job that's been done, at the same time as being open to new ideas and challenges, but that's an easier place to be

than literally starting something from the ground up."

Since becoming managing director of Beales Hotels in 2001, Andrew has taken some big decisions - particularly the £5.5 million rebuild of Hatfield Lodge Hotel, which was renamed Beales Hotel, in 2004. A £2 million extension is due to open at Beales Hotel this summer, while £250,000 is being spent on a refurbishment of West Lodge Park.

Andrew is thankful his father isn't "a meddler" like his grandfather, who retired as chairman at 85. "My father became chairman in 1990, but he always had the figure of my grandfather hanging over him.

"My father chose a very different route and retired, completely and absolutely, on his 65th birthday. We chat from time to time but he's not involved in the business at all," Andrew says.

"Although I'm glad he's not a meddler, I feel there's a middle way there. One can retire at 65 but stay on as non-executive chairman, as a figurehead really; I think guests and staff appreciate that."



"HE SAID, 'HERE'S SOME KEYS, I'LL SEE YOU, SON, AND LEFT'"

As chief executive of The Goring in London, near Buckingham Palace, Jeremy Goring has a lot to live up to.

The hotel was opened in 1910 by his German great-grandfather Otto Richard Goring, who passed over the reins to Jeremy's grandfather Otto Gustav Goring.

Jeremy took over the running of the hotel from his father, the enigmatic George Goring, just under three years ago, having never worked there before.

"My dad is a fairly iconic hotelier, and I just felt that the two of us in one building might cause a massive family rift and make us both quite miserable, and it might be



Generation gains: Andrew Beale with his father Trevor at West Lodge Park. They stand in front of a portrait of Thomas Henderson Beale (1866-1956), the father of Edward, who moved the family's interests into hotelkeeping in 1945