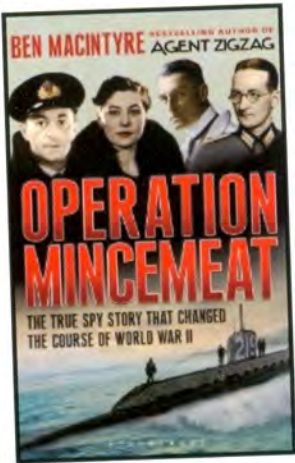
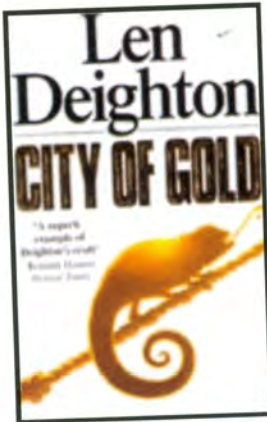


## SHEPHEARD



Cover story: The Shepherd features in fiction and non-fiction



'Ah, that's all very hush-hush, Piotr,' said Dalrymple and lowered his voice. 'I met an old chum in Shepherd's bar last week. Toby Wallingford, RNVR, a very good pal...'

A recent arrival in Cairo, I knew nothing of the Shepherd Hotel. Now that I do know a little, the name seems to be popping up everywhere.

I had two books on the go recently and the above lift is from Len Deighton's *City Of Gold*, set in Cairo during early 1942 when the city anticipated the imminent arrival of Rommel's Africa Korps.

Deighton, one of my favourite novelists (*The Ipcress File* and the rest of the Michael Caine-immortalised Harry Palmer stories; the Bernard Sampson spy series) is not to be underestimated as a cookery writer or historian (*Blitzkrieg, Battle of Britain*), but it is unclear if he ever visited the earlier Shepherd he refers to in *City of Gold*.

He had served as an Intelligence Service photographer during his National Service, but by the time Deighton was visiting exotic locations as a BOAC steward in 1956-57, the hotel he refers to in *City of Gold* had burned down.

But his phrase 'hush-hush' so wells suits the military connotations of the name Shepherd – the original building having been Napoleon's quarters during his invasion of Egypt. *City of Gold* is fiction (though background detail is based as always on Deighton's

exhaustive research) but the Shepherd played a definite role, unwitting or otherwise, in another theatre of the War.

Ben MacIntyre's gripping *Operation Mincemeat* deals with the subterfuge of the 'man who never was'. A body, apparently of a Royal Marine, was washed onto the coast of Fascist-sympathising Spain in 1943 carrying false papers to convince the Germans that the Allies were planning to invade southern France and Greece, rather than the actual target of Sicily.

As the invasion date approached for 'Operation Husky' more and more Allied officers inevitably became aware of the actual plans, while one of the key intelligence officers was based in Cairo.

There had already been two security blunders; *A Soldier's Guide to Sicily*, was distributed far too early to troops on the docksides, while a British officer based in Cairo sent his uniform to the cleaners with the Husky battle plans in one of the pockets. When the booklet was returned several pages had been ripped out and apparently used as invoices for other customers.

And then, as MacIntyre reveals ... 'an officer of the British 1<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division accidentally left a top secret cable on the terrace of the Shepherd's Hotel in Cairo.

"The document not only gave the date

and time of the Sicily invasion, but also the timing for dropping paratroops and even the numbers of aircraft and gliders for the operation.

"The paper was missing for at least two days before the hotel manager returned it to the authorities." The head of British Intelligence in Cairo took the view that if German spies had seen the cable they would have dismissed it as being an obvious ruse.

A different building it is true, but the same name ... the Shepherd, a name that is weaved in and out of Cairo's life since the Briton Samuel Shepherd founded the first hotel in the mid-nineteenth century, to become a magnet for the glitterati of international society as they passed through to and from Asia, India and the Far East.

Now, from its location overlooking the Nile, elegance, style and sophistication still form that link with the glamour of the past, a glamour being recaptured with High Tea afternoons on a Tuesday.

But the Shepherd is also adept at looking to the future, as shown by accommodation that reflects recent renovations and refurbishments which have come on stream alongside improvements in facilities and amenities. But always there is that unbroken link with Cairo's past and the wider world.

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Napoleon Bar



Asia House

## THE GLAMOROUS SHEPHEARD By Richard Taylor



The entrance of the original Shepherd Hotel



A military concert staged outside the original hotel around 1890

The Shepherd Hotel is a name woven into the tapestry of Cairo's history for over 150 years . . . a glamorous, mysterious and often tumultuous past. The name is redolent of exotic and dangerous times, a name that attracted statesmen, soldiers, explorers and the glitterati of high society from across the globe in the days when travellers truly were intrepid.

The phrase "The place to see and be seen" slips off the lips of public relations gurus too easily these days, but in nineteenth century Cairo the Shepherd truly was the place to be seen, a social mecca and stopover for those journeying to India and the Far East. It was the haunt of British Army officers and the original building had been commandeered at the start of the century as the headquarters and private quarters of Napoleon.

The original Shepherd Hotel, built at the start of the 1840s by Briton Samuel Shephard precisely to attract travellers en route to and from the East, was located near Opera Square. Its terrace, laid out with wicker chairs and tables, was the ideal vantage point to watch Cairo life scurry or saunter by on Ibrahim Pasha Street below.

The hotel was burned down during the civil unrest of the early 50s and a few years later the current reincarnation of Samuel Shephard's vision was built overlooking the Nile adjacent to the Kasr El Nil Bridge.

Now the Shepherd is poised for another rebirth following the signing of a management agreement with Rocco Forte and ahead of a two-year renovation and refurbishment programme due to begin in July next year.

But have no fear, the confident air of class, style and elegance will remain as the foundation that underpins the changes. The Shepherd's link with the past will not be jeopardised or sacrificed, but refreshed as with the 'Take Me Back to

Glamorous Cairo' High Tea occasions beginning this month in the Shepherd's Lounge.

The culture of applying five star attitude and service already runs through every facet of operations at the Shepherd, which has already benefited from being 'refreshed' recently. The sixth and seventh floors have been renovated, while double glazing has been introduced in deluxe rooms. Furnishings and colours are calming, welcoming and sumptuous in the understated way that says so much about the Shepherd brand.

The Shepherd has 263 truly stylish Standard rooms, including five for the disabled, 23 unique Duplex rooms on three levels, eight palatial Corner Suites and one Presidential Suite: the majority of rooms have views over the Nile, including all of the Corner Suites and the Presidential Suite.

Alongside the Shepherd's lobby, with its unobtrusively efficient Front Office and Concierge staff, the Café, Caravan Restaurant and Asia House form the hub of the hotel's culinary offerings. On the mezzanine floor, a gallery overlooks the Caravan and is also the level into the Napoleon bar.

Décor in the Asia House is as delicious as the food: tall, latticed arches form a backdrop to spaciouly placed tables, other tables are set into softly lit alcoves while the sounds of a water feature gently fill the room. The Napoleon Bar creates the relaxed air of a gentlemen's club; tables in the Caravan overlook the Nile.

The Shepherd has perfected the art of staying classic, refined, sophisticated and elegant without being stuffy. With wi-fi and internet in all public areas, the Shepherd knows its place in the modern world, while always respecting its traditions and place in Cairo's colourful past.

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