

## 25th January 2014 Adieu l'Auberge des Pyramides

### Now the party's over

Without much fanfare, one more Cairo landmark has bitten the dust. Last week, writes **Fayza Hassan**, the famous Auberge des Pyramides, witness to almost half a century of Egyptian nightlife, was razed to the ground

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Opened in the summer of 1943, the Auberge des Pyramides became an immediate favourite with the British officers and the cosmopolitan elite intent on having as much fun as possible during the troubled years of the war. "It had a large open air courtyard with a dance floor in the middle," writes World War II historian Artemis Cooper, "and was judged the most pleasant night spot in Cairo, becoming a frequent venue for charity galas and... a favourite haunt of the king's [Farouk]." The



[DANCING DAYS: above, the winter nightclub; below, the Auberge in 1946; 1986, fire damage after the Central Security Force riots](#)

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Auberge soon had much more to offer, and in time featured an indoor area with a dance floor that could be electrically raised to double up as a stage, artificial waterfalls and a décor equalling in flamboyance the best international establishments of its class. In summer, Egyptian and foreign artists and troupes performed on an open-air stage facing the swimming pool, on both sides of which the patrons' tables and chairs were arranged. After the spectacle the revelers proceeded to La Salle Dorée (the golden room) in the basement, which remained open until 4.00am and where artists could sit with the clients, drinking champagne. The Auberge also included lunch and day use with changing rooms for the swimming pool users.

Cooper recounts that when it opened, the new nightclub became an instant favourite of Lord Killearn (then Sir Miles Lampson), who on two memorable occasions arrived while King Farouk was already seated at his table by the dance floor. The first time, the ambassador's niece Betty, who amused the king with her forthright humour, accompanied him; His Majesty left at ten, and an astonished Killearn was told that Farouk had picked up the tab. The second time, Killearn brought Noel Coward to the Auberge and was led to a table next to that of the monarch, who was there with Air Marshal Sir William Sholto Douglas and Connie Carpenter, "an actress who had been the first to sing *Poor Little Rich Girl* in the United States." Killearn introduced Coward to the king, who again left early, and again paid their bill. "Coward rather regretted having ordered a beer and two packets of Gold Flake," adds Cooper.

Egyptians escorting beautiful women shunned the Auberge as they did any of Farouk's favourite haunts, for fear that he might take a fancy to a wife or girlfriend and create a most embarrassing situation, for the king was well known for his wrath when refused the companionship of a woman he coveted. His Majesty's arrival invariably provoked the precipitous exodus of the pashas and their fair partners.

The Auberge des Pyramides was a favourite venue for some of the most glorious fetes given during the war by members of the royal family. It was chosen by Princess Shevikar for her magnificent Christmas Stocking Ball, which she hosted dressed entirely in black velvet -- "the better to display one of the most stunning diamond necklaces [Lampson] had ever seen. [in Lord Killearn's *Diaries*]" The magnificent Coptic ball that followed was another Auberge event that was not soon forgotten by those lucky enough to have been invited. [continued>> \[http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2001/548/li1.htm\]](http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2001/548/li1.htm)

Posted 25th January 2014 by [Aimee Kligmanm](#)

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