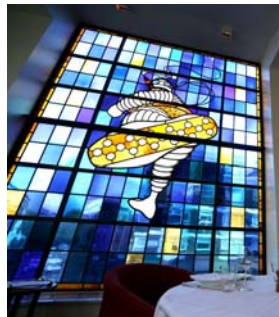


# Images: 2011



[www.michelin.co.uk/centenary](http://www.michelin.co.uk/centenary)

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## Images: 1911-



### Did you know?:

Part of the floor of the tyre store was sloped to facilitate movement of tyres. This can still be seen in The Conran Shop today!

# Bibendum Restaurant

The main staircase to the right of the present day Oyster Bar leads to the Bibendum Restaurant on the first floor. The main features of this room are the stained glass windows.

This room has had many roles, for example,, in the 1970s and early 1980s as the general and personnel offices of the Michelin UK commercial headquarters.



## The centre panel:

'Nunc est Bibendum', latin for 'now is the time to drink' is based on an advertising poster created for Michelin by Marius Rossillon known as O'Galop in 1901. It forms the upper part of the front window in the restaurant.

## The 'Semelle' window

The Semelle window is based on another O'Galop poster this time dating from 1905.

The Semelle was a studded tyre and was portrayed by Bibendum in a pugilistic stance having a kick at the competition. The original title was 'Le coup de la semelle Michelin' - 'The kick of the Michelin tread'.

## The 'cycle' window

Based on yet another advertising poster which although unsigned is in the style of English designer and artist Stanley Rowles.

The caption for the poster was 'Michelin cycle tyres, the best, the least expensive'. In the period before the first world war, there were very few cars on the roads, but bicycles could be counted in the hundreds of thousands. Cycle tyres would be a very important part of the business at that time.

Bibendum is shown riding with one hand in his pocket and a cigar in the other, demonstrating the stability and smoothness of the ride.

The stained glass windows would have acted as a very striking advert for the company, especially at night when illuminated.

# The Building

## General background

Michelin House, 81 Fulham Road, Chelsea, S.W. was designed by a Michelin employee Francois Espinasse who although not a trained architect created a truly unique building that incorporated design ideas that anticipated the Art Deco movement 10 years later. It was the first building in London to use reinforced concrete in its construction and its distinctive style was never copied, leaving Michelin House a totally unique building.



Opened on 20 January 1911 it was extended in 1912 and 1922 serving various purposes within the company and becoming the UK commercial headquarters in the early 1950s. The building was given Grade II listed building status on 15 April 1969 and was ultimately sold in 1985 to Sir Terence Conran and Paul Hamlyn of the Conran Octopus publishing company who restored and converted it to a restaurant, Oyster bar and The Conran Shop preserving the unique features of the original building such as the tiled panels, the mosaic floor and recommissioning the beautiful stained glass windows which had been removed before WWII and had subsequently disappeared.

When Michelin House was first opened, motoring was in its early days as was the Michelin Tyre Company in Great Britain. The building housed most of the Company's functions, such as general offices, sales, tyre fitting, warehouse and distribution centre. There was a touring office where complete route itineraries were meticulously planned by hand, the ViaMichelin.com of its day.

Michelin House occupied the whole of the irregularly shaped city block that fronts onto Fulham Road.

Today, the front part of the building is the Bibendum Restaurant and Oyster Bar whereas the rear of the building is The Conran Shop and offices.

# Externally

## The Front: Fulham Road

In 1911 Michelin House would have been even more striking than today as the surrounding buildings would have been dark and pollution stained from coal fires. Look for overlapped MTC emblems at the top of the centre columns and repeated elsewhere around the building. On the skyline, edge on, are two reproductions of the studded 'Semelle' tyre. Above the smaller first floor windows are two panels showing spoked wheels with a foliage surround of rubber tree leaves and flowers. Lower centre is a panel of iron tracery again with the MTC emblem and surrounded by rubber tree leaves. The bottom of the building was a 'Reception for customer's cars. In part the building was a tyre depot.



## Corners:

Very rarely are the corners of buildings worth a mention! At first floor level at each side of the building is the word MICHELIN written vertically which illuminate at night. A powerful advertising message for 100 years. At the top of each corner column is a cupola (small dome-like structure) reproducing the body of The Michelin Man of the time and which are also illuminated at night.

## Sides:

### Left:- Sloane Avenue. Right: Lucan Place

The sides of the building are more functional although still rich in detail showing ceramic tiled panels of sporting victories at ground floor level between the windows. First floor front on each side is another stained glass window underneath the word Bibendum at roof level. Also at roof level can be seen two more spoked wheel panels surrounded by foliage and MTC emblems.

The further you travel down the side of the building away from Fulham Road, the less decorated the building becomes.

On Sloane Avenue behind the limit of the original 1911 building where there was initially an open yard area, there is now The Conran Shop Chelsea which has a window display to celebrate the dual centenary.

# Entrance and Oyster Bar

The main entrance to the building provided a number of functions. It was a glorious advertisement for the Company, it provided an off road waiting area for customers' cars and it was and remains a wonderful piece of art.



As you view the front of the building, there are three arches. Inside the left one, there was a six ton weighbridge. The right hand one and the double width central arch were available for waiting or the replacement of customers' tyres.

Today, the left and right hand arches are occupied by a flower stall (left) and shellfish stall (right) where fresh shellfish is available all week and fresh lobster can be purchased on Saturday mornings.

Behind the central arch was the entrance to the sales office where customers could order tyres or enquire after repairs. To the left of the entrance was the touring office, the Edwardian equivalent of ViaMichelin. On the wall behind the counter of the sales room are more of the tiled panels, the centre of which was an elaborately crafted example depicting King Edward VII in his Royal Daimler limousine and celebrating the 'by Appointment to his late Majesty...' a powerful recommendation in its day.

Today the sales room is now the Bibendum Oyster Bar where the tiled panels have been preserved. The 'nunc est..' mosaic on the floor is also preserved, although on busy days, may be difficult to see completely.

The original touring office is now an extension of the Oyster bar, the entrance to which is now in the middle window position where it was originally on the left.

Behind the present day shellfish stall and to the right of the sales room is the staircase leading to the current first floor restaurant

**Did you know?:** There are 34 tiled panels in total depicting the Company's achievements in the earliest days of racing and manned flight