

## Searcys

### A Message from Lord Pickles and Lord Blunkett, followed by Searcys's best practice article

The ability to listen and learn from one another has always been vital in parliament, in business and in most aspects of daily life. But at this particular moment in time, as national and global events continue to reiterate, it is uncommonly crucial that we forge new channels of communication and reinforce existing ones. The following article from Searcys is an attempt to do just that. We would welcome your thoughts on this or any other Parliamentary Review article.



Rt Hon The Lord David Blunkett, MP



Rt Hon The Lord Eric Pickles, MP

[www.searcys.co.uk](http://www.searcys.co.uk)

# Searcys



Managing Director Matt Thomas



St Pancras Brasserie and Champagne Bar by Searcys

## FACTS ABOUT SEARCYS

- » Managing Director: Matt Thomas
- » Established in 1847
- » Based in Farringdon, London
- » Services: Catering and hospitality
- » No. of employees: 1,200

In 1847, the Duke of Northumberland spotted potential in a young pastry chef in his kitchen team. Seeing that the budding chef was destined for bigger things, he offered to support him to found what was to become the UK's first catering company: Searcys and Sons. Over 170 years later, Searcys employ 1,200 people across 33 sites in the UK, including in historic venues, from St Paul's Cathedral to The Gherkin. Managing Director Matt Thomas details their remarkable history and how they have embraced innovation.

Over the years, we have gained an impeccable reputation for catering for a diverse portfolio of clients. Historic venues include The Orangery at Blenheim Palace, Wren's Tea Room at St Paul's Cathedral, the award-winning Design Museum in Kensington, The Pump Room in Bath and the restaurants and bars at the iconic Gherkin and St Pancras International. In 2018, we proudly celebrated the company's most successful year since its foundation in 1847. The annual accounts for the year ending December 2018 showed that we achieved double-digit growth at our flagship venues.

In March 2019, we opened two new venues: one at The Honourable Artillery Company in London, and, as a true homecoming, another at The Alnwick Garden, by the appointment of the Duchess of Northumberland.

This outcome is a result of our strategic plan and rebrand, appealing to a new and modern market. We aimed to bring our identity closer in line with our heritage while making it more contemporary and forward-looking. Consumer research, conducted by Future Thinking, revealed that 32 per cent of UK diners and 39 per cent of Londoners are aware of the name Searcys. With a privileged position in the UK's venue and restaurant market, the rebranding allowed us to expand awareness nationwide.

Our strategic five-year plan has articulated the brand's purpose as British hospitality specialists, as well as the international appeal of our world-renowned champagne bars. Our brand vision of "making the people we serve and work with feel special by being consistently exceptional" manifests itself through investment in flagship sites and our people, building a sustainable, responsible business.

Our iconic restaurants, champagne bars and events have an established reputation for quality and innovation. We carved out a name as brave market leaders, launching bold, forward-thinking concepts.

A flagship example of our success is at The Gherkin. The iconic Norman Foster-designed building had its levels 39 and 40 levels relaunched as Helix restaurant and Iris bar. Previously a members' club, The Gherkin was open to the public from July 2018. Level 38 was also revamped with five private dining spaces to reflect market trends for smaller, more intimate events.

The iconic St Pancras Brasserie and Europe's longest champagne bar, which we both manage, were also remodelled and relaunched in April 2018 with the addition of a new concept: Champagne School. Toasting the 150th anniversary of St Pancras Station, Champagne School was designed to appeal to all kinds of lovers of champagne and English sparkling wine. The revenue of these two venues has increased 18 per cent year on year. The overall customer sentiment has been increasing steadily too, with 98 per cent positive customer reviews of food quality and 92 per cent of value in autumn 2018.

### Learning and development

Over 1,600 delegates attended our internal courses in 2018, helping to widen their knowledge and skills and to provide personal development.

Feedback concluded that 86 per cent would recommend the courses to a colleague, and 96 per cent would utilise their new skills.

Furthermore, we launched an apprenticeship scheme. This supports a new generation of UK chefs, giving opportunities to young talent across the country. Six new apprentices started working in our kitchens in 2018.

### The importance of sustainability

In 2018, we launched our first ever sustainability pledges. We champion the best ingredients available, working closely with British farmers and producers to ensure that up to 90 per cent of the seasonal fruit and vegetables we use is grown in the UK. Our champagne list follows the same concept, and we shifted our focus to celebrate the most acclaimed English sparkling wine.

Our new menus incorporate UK-reared fresh meat; flour milled in England; and free-range eggs and milk from Red Tractor-certified farms, as well as our signature smoked salmon, sourced directly from the family-run and Royal Warrant-holding John Ross Jr.

Using seasonal and high-quality produce, our chefs reimagine and

“Our brand vision is to make the people we serve and work with feel special by being consistently exceptional”

A selection of our seasonal starters





Helix at the Gherkin



Over 56,000 bottles of Searcys signature cuvée are sold each year

reinvent modern British dishes. Our recently awarded Two Star Food Made Good rating by the Sustainable Restaurant Association is a testament to how provenance and sustainability are at the heart of our business.

This year sees us expanding our commitment to sustainability with a new set of pledges. This includes an ongoing partnership with Beyond Food, a social enterprise that helps those who are most at risk of homelessness to gain employment in hospitality. In December 2018, we raised £10,000 for the charity through our A Very Searcys Christmas campaign.

We have established a number of meaningful brand partnerships in line with the company's rebranding goals. Supper clubs and collaborations with well-known UK chefs like Saturday Kitchen TV presenter Matt Tebbutt or the award-winning British chocolatier William Curley were the highlights of our events calendar. This January, Searcys at The Gherkin partnered with Great British Bake Off finalist Ruby Bhogal, Harley Street nutritionist Rhiannon Lambert and ethical yoga company Yogasphere for a month of wellness-related supper clubs and events.

Outside of London, we have collaborated with the quintessentially

British perfume house Penhaligon's to create a series of afternoon tea packages at Blenheim Palace and with Extract Coffee, a sustainable roaster in Bristol. Our espresso has been specially blended by the team in collaboration with Extract Coffee, using 60 per cent Project Peru beans. These are directly sourced from an organic co-operative of smallholders, who work closely with Extract Coffee to build a "quality pays" ethos in their community.

### An oversaturated market

One of the main challenges we face is the level of competition in our industry: there are too many providers for too few customers. Many choose to discount their products, but we prefer to add value. As we are in a service sector, we need to think laterally to ensure that we remain attractive to consumers.

We work hard to retain the customers we have while expanding our profile. Key to this is supporting sustainable and ethical products, as the importance of ethical consumption continues to grow. By continuing to uphold our heritage and embrace these modern trends, we are sure we will be able to thrive long into the future.

“The importance of ethical consumption sits firmly in our minds and so we support sustainable and ethical products”