

ADVERTISEMENT FEATURE Seckford Hall

Renovation takes hotel into new era of style and comfort



Seckford Hall Hotel, in Woodbridge, has recently completed the first phase of its refurbishment programme, which now firmly positions it as one of the leading four star hotels in the county.

The beautiful 15th century hotel has been painstakingly renovated and sympathetically expanded over the last few months as part of works which will be ongoing over the next 18 months.

The building itself was already amazing, with unique details you'd expect from the Tudor era. With new owners, and a substantial investment, the hotel is not only grand now, but comfortable, keeping the spirit of its past.

Taking inspiration from its extraordinarily beautiful surroundings and adding the odd contemporary twist to bring it to life, Seckford Hall is now luxurious and bang up to date with the technology that you'd expect from a four star property.

What will capture you as soon as you walk in is the new sense of elegance. The interior designers have worked hard to create exceptional comfort taking into the account the environment of the iconic listed building. What has been created is a welcoming atmosphere full of character and individuality.

Walking through the hotel the reception has now been moved into an open plan check-in area. Muted tones and strong accents of colour from burnt orange luxury sofas, to stunning designer statement lighting certainly give the 'wow factor' here.

The East Wing (once the previous owners' private residence) has been opened up to expand the ground floor of the hotel.

The Mulberry Suite is a new function area suitable for an intimate wedding, a private dinner, company celebration or conference. Seating up to 40 guests the suite overlooks the once private gardens with doors onto a tranquil reclaimed York Stone terrace. There is also space for a large marquee on the lawns making it a stunning location for any event.

The East Wing is also home to a new executive boardroom for up to



■ Welcome to Seckford Hall - operations director Mark Suddes.

16 guests. Again, this space not only could be used for meetings but for private functions and dinners too. A new lounge area has also been completed which again overlooks the gardens and terrace area.

Both new suites will offer their own executive and function menus.

The 'jewels in the crown' at Seckford have to be the new restaurant, 1530, and the Taittinger Champagne and Cocktail Bar.

1530 has to be one of Suffolk's newest and finest dining destinations. Ideal for both business and pleasure the talented team of chefs turn local produce into mouth-watering dishes.

Menus change seasonally under the direction of joint head chefs Ashley Durrant and Liam Oakenfull who have both previously worked at prestigious hotels both in the UK and abroad.

The restaurant is relaxed, stylish and comfortable, full of character but unpretentious. The new design is

one that is classical in nature with a warm interior. Stunning statement lighting and an eclectic mix of colours mirror the Tudor charm of the hotel.

The Taittinger Champagne and Cocktail Bar is truly stunning. In what was once the Great Hall, the bar offers an array of cocktails and, of course, Champagne to choose from.

Little touches like an olive menu and the welcome addition of a wood-burning stove for the colder winter nights, add to the ambience and experience of the new Seckford.

A major bedroom refurbishment is well under way too. Four bedrooms are already completed with a rolling programme continuing over the next year.

Sarah Foster, from Stansted in Essex, was tasked with imagining the interiors and really wanted to add contemporary touches whilst respecting the heritage of the property.



She felt that when guests turn into the main gates at the hotel, they are met with such an incredible vista, they have expectations before they've even stepped foot through the front door. She therefore wanted to create the same sense of amazement when they reach their bedrooms.

By the end of September the new intimate snug bar will be completed, and plans have been submitted to transform the leisure club, housed in a Tudor Tithe Barn in the grounds of the hotel.

The Spa at Seckford Hall will have a range of treatment rooms, two of which will be double treatment rooms, a swimming pool, gym and spa.

Plans are also afoot for further bedrooms in the grounds of the hotel.

Operations director Mark Suddes and his team look forward to seeing customers old and new alike: whether it's for a drink after work in the new Champagne bar, a midweek get-together with friends or colleagues, afternoon tea, or a special weekend meal in with friends and family in the new 1530 restaurant.

With such major improvements and a completely new look and feel, people will certainly have that and will want to come back for more.

■ **Contact:** www.seckford.co.uk; call 01394 385678.

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Meet the chefs Liam and Ashley

Ashley and Liam have been working together at Seckford Hall for a number of years and have recently been promoted to the role of joint head chefs.

Ashley Durrant, who is Ipswich born and bred, studied his craft at Suffolk College, with his first appointments at Felixstowe Docks and then the Directors' Restaurant. From there Ashley has worked for two other local hotels - The Moat House at Copdock and the prestigious Hintlesham Hall.

A keen golfer, who has represented Suffolk County, Ashley is looking forward to developing Seckford Hall's menus together with Liam to make the hotel a real destination for great locally sourced food.

Liam Oakenfull originally joined Seckford Hall after three years at The Tower and Ritz Hotels in London. He left Seckford after four years to pursue a career as a private chef before taking on role as sous chef at the Belstead Brook Hotel in Ipswich.

Other career highlights for Liam were working as sous chef at Ipswich Town Football Club and working in Cyprus at The Palm Beach in Limassol. After a very successful career at The Gatehouse, he decided to return to Seckford Hall as senior sous chef, before taking up his current role as joint head chef.

Mark Suddes, operations director, commented: "I am absolutely delighted to welcome my new senior team.

"Their individual specialisms and experiences will be a great asset to both the hotel and our clients alike. It will also further strengthen our brand repositioning and better prepare the company to reach its growth strategy."

