



HAMBLETON HALL

1980 **40** 2020

PRESS RELEASE

Hambleton Hall celebrates 40 years

[24th Jun 2020] On 1st July Hambleton Hall in Rutland celebrates its 40th birthday. Tim and Stefa Hart, the couple who set up Hambleton Hall in 1980 are still directly involved in the management of the hotel and will be leading the anniversary celebrations when the hotel re-opens on 5th July.

“I feel fortunate that I left banking early in my career and went into the hospitality business. It has brought us enormous pleasure every year. Although the hotel has remained small with 17 bedrooms and one restaurant since the outset, we have continually evolved each area to reflect changing guest needs which has renewed enthusiasm and motivation.” Tim summarises.

“Each year we create new dishes in the kitchen and redecorate a bedroom or reception room. In 2010 we started Hambleton Bakery to provide bread for the hotel and retail shops in the area. In 2015 we built the 2-bedroom Croquet Pavilion. Last year we redesigned the 1-acre kitchen garden to incorporate a new greenhouse, raised beds, and additional fruit trees. This year we demolished the kitchen to make way for a new one having calculated that 572,000 meals had emerged over the last 26 years. Now the old Bonnet range has been scrapped and a new Athanor has been installed.”



Choosing Rutland back in 1980 was a gamble as despite its attractive market towns, stone villages and the picturesque Rutland Water as it was unheard of as a domestic short break destination.

So, the Harts created a house which combined a spectacular setting with exceptional cuisine. Tim and Stefa had fallen in love with Michel Guerard’s Les Prés d’Eugénie in France which inspired them to appoint maverick chef Nick Gill (brother of late restaurant critic AA Gill) to develop a fine dining restaurant that would draw the crowds. It also inspired them to join Relais & Chateaux as one of its first UK member hotels.

They commissioned renowned interior designer Nina Campbell to transform the original 19th century hunting box into a sumptuous and elegant English country house, each of its 17 bedrooms decorated in a private house style with colourful interiors, antique furniture, luxurious wallcoverings and artwork.

London’s food critics and media heralded the new hotel a success and business took off from there. In 1992 they hired Aaron Patterson as the new head chef from Le Manoir Aux Quat’Saisons, who had previously worked at Hambleton Hall under Nick Gill. Aaron has been a consistent and valued asset to the hotel ever since. Choosing to champion local produce with creative, precise cooking, he is widely recognised

for his rigorous commitment to local game and foraged vegetables. He writes his daily menus depending on what comes to the back door. With reassuring regularity, one of Aaron's many foragers or farmers will pop their head through the kitchen door in person offering incredible ingredients from blewits and puffballs to salsify, apples or Jerusalem artichokes, quince or crab apples, sea vegetables or zander, woodcock or teal. Aaron will unite these new finds with existing combinations to create recipe evolutions each day. Dishes include; breast of Merrifield duck with watermelon, feta and endive, grouse with blackberry sauce and traditional accompaniments, roast mallard with corn and a pie of its own leg meat, roast pheasant with Jerusalem artichoke and truffle, hare wellington with root vegetables and a prune and Armagnac sauce.

Hambleton Hall was first awarded a Michelin Star in 1982 and proudly holds the record as the longest retained star in the UK. It has also retained 4 AA Rosettes for decades as well as winning almost every accolade there is. Recent wins include Good Hotel Guide's Cesar winner for Best Hotel in 2017, AA Notable Wine List 2017, AA Housekeeper of the Year 2018, Good Hotel Guide's Editor's Choice 2019, The Caterer Extra Mile Award, 6th place in Harden's Top 100 Restaurants 2020.

Teamwork

"The key to success and longevity in this business is the people." Explains Tim. "My core team have been with me for a combined total of 125 years!" This includes restaurant director Graeme Mathieson (36 years), Aaron (28 years), sommelier Dominique Baduel (21 years), general manager Chris Hurst (17 years), marketing manager Carolyn Turner (17 years) and housekeeper Ewa Biolonos (6 years).

Aaron agrees that the principle is the same for his brigade; "some of my team have been with me for 16 years," explains Aaron, who became a partner in the business 20 years ago. "It is rare to retain 4 chefs in the same, small kitchen for 16 years, but I think it demonstrates how much the menu and cooking styles have evolved over the years, and how this has provide the motivation we needed to stick together. I would like to thank Charlie and James and all my team for their passion, their tireless quest for perfection and their unstinting dedication to creating beautiful food over the years."



Over the years, some outstanding chefs have trained with Aaron including James Petrie, Sean Hope, Adam Stokes, Chris Denney, Gareth Ward, Peter Templehoff and John Freeman who have gone on to earn their own stars and open successful businesses.

Creating a garden

"I'm a keen gardener and like to compete with Stefa, who is the creative force behind our garden at home. The process of improving Hambleton's gardens started in earnest in the mid-1980s and continues to gather pace. It has been a matter of constant tweaking, planting and improvement." says Tim.

"Over the years, we have built a body of regulars who like what we do and plan to return. But we are aware that every day is a new day and the magic must be recreated. Nonetheless, we are benefitting now from



consistency that flows from a widely experienced team and the confidence that a guest feels when he walks in the steps of so many happy guests from the past.” Tim concludes.

Enduring design

Inspired by Nina Campbell, Stefa developed a successful interior design business in the 1990s. Her business Hambleton Decorating is mainly commissioned for private homes, but Stefa also lends her design to Hambleton Hall. “I love dreaming up a new bedroom design scheme” she explains, “for example when it was time to redecorate Qazvin, I decided to include some antique wall hangings I acquired travelling in Iran. From this starting point, I created a whole scheme using rich burgundy and cream colours, a hand-decorated stencil devised for us by Dione Verulam and curtains to update the bedroom and give it a new lease of life.”



How will Hambleton Hall celebrate?

Tim, Stefa, Chris, Aaron, Graeme, Ewa, Dominique, Carolyn and all the team will celebrate this milestone by delivering the same impeccable service as always. Plus, there will be a fascinating series of events including:

- A series of food and wine events throughout the year including special guest Raymond Blanc who will share the kitchen with Aaron on 15th Oct for a gourmet experience
- New videos introducing the public to our local network of suppliers and our new kitchen garden
- Series of interviews with Tim and Stefa about their experiences

Hambleton Hall’s 40th anniversary dining experience, from £475 based on two people sharing a standard room includes a 3-course meal with coffee, a full Hambleton breakfast and VAT.

Links and resources:

www.hambletonhall.com/special_offers/40th-anniversary/

<https://www.hambletonhall.com/celebrating-40-years/>

www.hambletonbakery.co.uk



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To interview Tim and Stefa, or for more information please contact Claire Leslie, PR and Marketing on 07580 141785 or claire@luxury-group.co.uk