

# Paperchase opens a pint-sized flagship

The stationer's new store on Piccadilly proves there is more to a flagship than simply size. John Ryan reports

**T**hink about the term flagship as it is generally applied to shops and the mind immediately conjures up a substantial edifice. This is a store that will stop shoppers in their tracks owing to its size alone, and once inside the chances are good that there will be an enhanced range compared with a more modestly sized shop.

Everything, in short, should be bigger and better than what a customer would normally expect.

But does it have to be this way, and is size the sole criterion that should be applied when deciding if a store merits the flagship tag?

A visit to 199 Piccadilly in central London may go some way towards dispelling this mode of thinking. This is the address of the latest addition to the Paperchase empire. And, while this new branch of the stationer measures a relatively modest 1,800 sq ft, when set against the 22,000 sq ft Tottenham Court Road behemoth, which amply befits the normal flagship descriptor, several things make it stand out.

For starters, there's the address. A couple of hundred yards along the road from Piccadilly Circus, this is a very grand location and it rubs shoulders with neighbours including Fortnum & Mason, the Royal Academy of Arts and the Waterstones flagship.

It is very much smaller than any of these, yet expectations about the kind of ranges that will be on view are inevitably heightened by the address.

This is part of the St James' development, an area that stretches down to the south of Piccadilly and, like nearby Regent Street, is owned by the Crown Estate. Paperchase chief executive Timothy Melgund says that, in order to secure the site, proof had to be provided "that we were going to do something different. We would have to offer a level of sophistication that you wouldn't find in the non-flagship stores."

Paperchase is familiar with retail

**PAPERCHASE,  
199 PICCADILLY,  
LONDON**

**Opened** February 6

**Size** 1,800 sq ft

**Design** In-house

**Prominent features**

Wallpaper and a paper chandelier

sophistication, as evidenced by the opening of its 15,000 sq ft store in Glasgow last year, which features a suspended metal staircase and a cafe where customers can relax and sip a soy flat white. And the Glasgow store had "more people walking through the door in December than Tottenham Court Road", according to Melgund.

## Premium feel

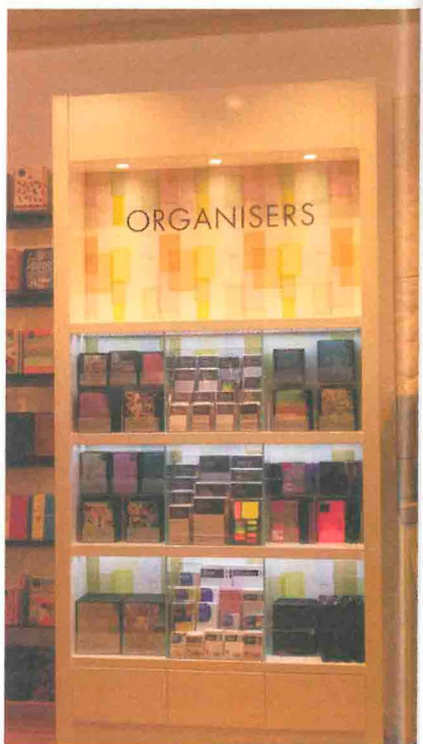
In the St James' store, sophistication equates to a more upscale product range, higher than average selling prices and a fit-out that rings the changes as progress is made from front to back of the long, rectangular space – all ensuring the flagship label is not a misnomer. That said, the initial feature that the visitor will notice, after seeing the Valentine's Day windows bearing the legend 'I love you shed loads', is the paper chandelier.

The overhead feature comprises 1,500 sheets of coloured paper that run in a rectangular block and conceal the metal grid, backed by fluorescent lighting, that lies behind. The pieces of paper are arranged in different colours and, as Melgund observes, "they can be changed and you could do almost anything, a wave form, a single colour, and so on".

He says creating the chandelier has been a labour of love and that it "took around two hours just to get the first bit done".

On the left there is a "notebook wall". This feature was piloted in the Glasgow store and has now been imported to St James', where it has pride of place on the perimeter wall just before the polished concrete cash desk. Melgund says that, as part of taking the product offer more upmarket, there are a lot of leather-bound notebooks, including the retailer's own version of the Moleskine, dubbed Agenzio, which is made in the same factory as the original brand.

The right-hand wall is filled with greetings cards, a high-margin, low-



For more pictures of Paperchase Piccadilly and more store galleries go to [retail-week.com/stores](http://retail-week.com/stores)





The Piccadilly shop is Paperchase's first white-walled store. The paper 'chandelier' (left) adds a splash of colour







◀ space category. And the mid-shop stocks gifts and stationery displayed on tables and tiered grey metal gondolas.

Melgund points out that this is the first time the retailer has created a white interior – until now colour has always been used.

### Upmarket merchandise

Towards the back of the shop things begin to change. The ceiling has been lowered, courtesy of a raft with recessed spotlights, to “create a more intimate atmosphere”, as Melgund puts it.

Beneath is an enclosed glass counter where shoppers can buy an expensive pen or biro, and it is backed by a long, back-lit rectangular recess in the wall where a range of different sized cacti are displayed in flowerpots with schoolboy-style wooden rulers used to illustrate the height of each. This has very little to do with any of the product on display, but creates a point of difference from what the shopper might expect in a stationery store.

At the back of the shop there is an area where leather satchels and bags can be perused, the majority of which are on glass shelves running across the back wall. The wall itself has been wallpapered with a design that is unique to this store and features a crown, in deference to the store's location – a hop, skip and a barouche-landau ride from Buckingham Palace.



**The store stocks upscale merchandise such as leather satchels and features a unique crown wallpaper design**

Melgund (the seventh Earl of Minto) says quite a lot of fun was had deciding which crown to use.

Look around the rest of the shop and it is a lesson in how to make small items work as part of large displays and demonstrates the power of carefully considered visual merchandising. This is certainly, in terms of square footage, a small(ish) store, but perhaps it really does merit the term flagship for the

way in which the interior has been approached and the product offer for the well-heeled that throng these parts.

Melgund says that this is just the beginning of the new store trail that will be pursued in 2014: “We did 22 last year, 16 in the UK, and we'll do 12 to 15 this year, the length and breadth of the country.” In Piccadilly this one is worth a visit, if only to see how much can be made of little.

