

# STORES

Stations are the places where we meet and greet. Where better therefore to sell Valentine's Day merchandise? **John Ryan** looks at what's been done in St Pancras, King's Cross and beyond

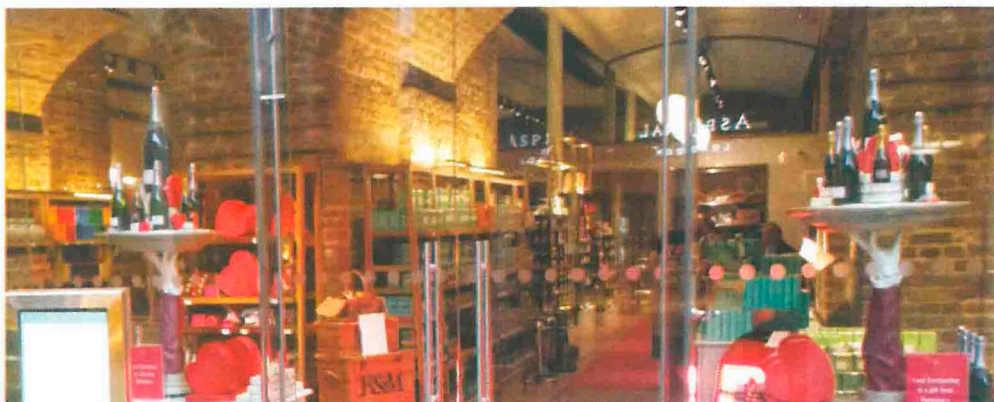
# Retailers get the

**T**here's a massive metal sculpture on the upper concourse of London's St Pancras station that depicts a couple in a loving clinch, reminiscent of a scene from *Brief Encounter*.

Whatever your view of the subject matter, there are few who would contest that this High Victorian Gothic edifice is one of the most glamorous places in the capital for meeting and greeting, or maybe weeping and wailing as a loved one departs.

What better place therefore for retailers to roll out their Valentine's Day wares and make the most of the season of hurve? A quick stroll around the station confirms this is a place where many will be picking up trinkets intended to bring a smile to the face of a loved one.

Other Valentine's Day retail destinations are, of course, available around the capital and feature here, but St Pancras is among the leaders.



## Godiva, St Pancras

Since chocolate is at the heart (sorry) of St Valentine's Day, many shoppers will beat a path to the Godiva store in St Pancras.

The Belgian chocolatier puts hearts (and a small teddy bear) in the window and carries the theme to the mid-shop interior where there is a large table laid out with heart-shaped chocolate boxes and piles of cream-centred confectionery.

Nothing has been left to chance – Valentine's is a big day for a chocolatier – and shelved

niches along the back wall have been filled with more stock aimed at the passing lover.

Of all the stores touting Valentine's Day merchandise in the station this has the most complete offer and it's a fair bet that by Monday preparations will be under way for Easter, when bunnies and eggs will be the order of the day.

But in spite of the focus on hearts and love, Fortnum & Mason edges this store as far as visual impact is concerned.

## Fortnum & Mason, St Pancras

Fortnum & Mason is now an established feature of the retail landscape at St Pancras and in this, its second St Valentine's Day display since it opened at the station, it has pulled out all the stops.

The windows feature circular silver trays supported by an arm. Each tray bears champagne bottles and heart-shaped chocolate boxes with a sign beneath stating: "Love Everlasting is a gift from Fortnum's".

The front of the shop is dominated by a plain wooden fixture set against the store's brick wall that is home to more hearts and chocolates.

This is not a huge display but it packs a punch and is the first and probably the only thing that the passer by would notice when glancing at the store.

At Fortnum's mothership in Piccadilly there are red outline hearts picked out in neon in the windows with elaborate visual merchandising to accompany them but, given that St Pancras is a small outpost, this promotion works well.

For more pictures of Valentine's Day  
visual merchandising visit  
[Retail-week.com/valentinestores](http://Retail-week.com/valentinestores)



# look of love

## Paperchase, St Pancras

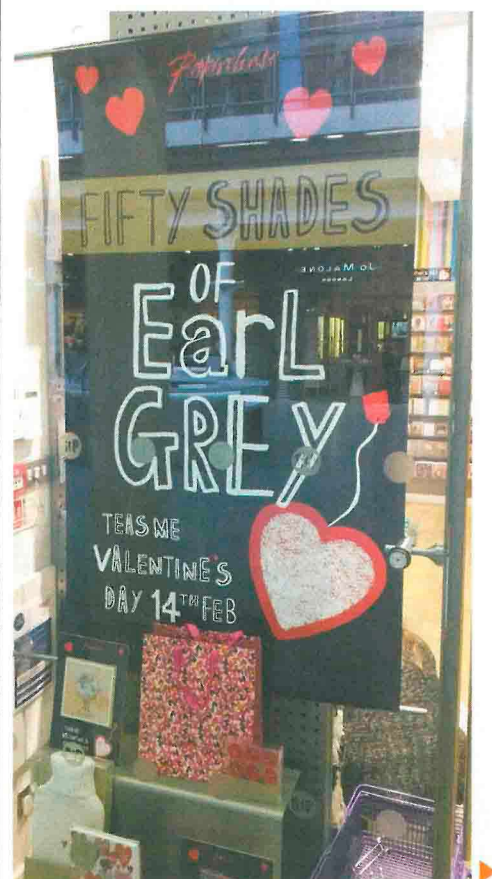
Today is the day when erotic crowd-pleaser *Fifty Shades of Grey* morphs from being a best-selling book to a film and doubtless cinema lovers everywhere will flock to view the on-screen action.

In an homage to the title, and to highlight the variety of puns adorning many of its Valentine's cards, Paperchase in St Pancras has a large faux blackboard graphic in its window bearing the legend "Fifty Shades of Earl Grey".

There is nothing terribly sophisticated about this, but on the other hand as a way of piggybacking on a film campaign and a book that everybody knows (and probably will not admit to having read), this is a clever and funny campaign.

The poster is accompanied by a small selection of merchandise on a shelf beneath, but the onlooker will hardly notice this – the joke is the graphic.

Within the store, it's all fairly standard Valentine's Day stuff with a perimeter panel covered in cards with red hearts all over them.



## Hotel Chocolat, King's Cross

Just across the road from St Pancras is the more recently refurbished King's Cross station. In retail terms it is a more modest and mid-market affair than its neighbour, with a single possible exception: Hotel Chocolat.

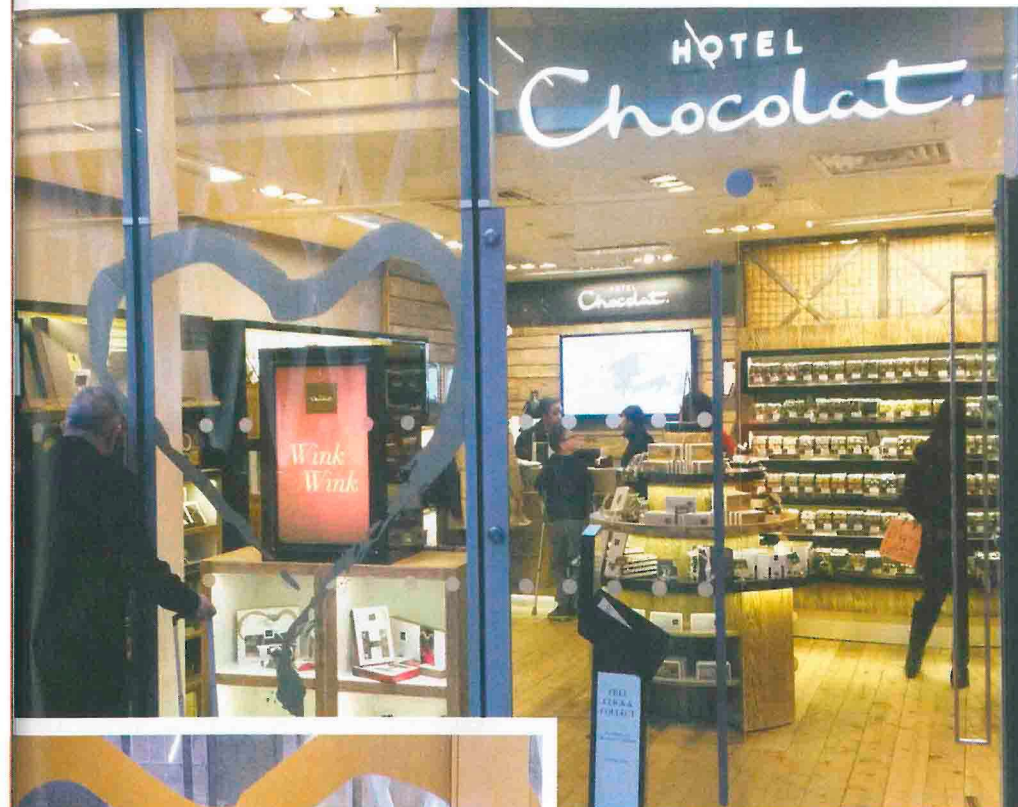
The retailer has gone to town for Valentine's Day, with a double-sided digital screen in the window. The exterior-facing side carries the message "Wink Wink" in a white font set against a rose-pink background, while on the other side there is a picture of, yes, a heart-shaped box of chocolates.

Passers by will notice that the screen, which has pride of place in the window, is surrounded by a heart-shaped grey decal that has been applied to the glass.

As far as the store's visual merchandising is concerned, the interior is a festival of love in the form of multiple hearts on sticks, in boxes and suchlike.

The carefully crafted plain wood fixtures ensure the effect is not brash and is different from nearby rivals.

Along with Debenhams on Oxford Street, this is one of the few stores that has opted to add a digital element to its promotion.



# STORES

## ► Debenhams, Oxford Street

Debenhams on Oxford Street has made a big deal of Valentine's Day.

The shop windows have been filled with mannequins wearing the kind of black lacy lingerie that might make observers think the giver rather than the receiver might be happy with the outcome on February 14. The mannequins have a pink and cerise candy stripe surround and the colour scheme carries into the store interior.

One of the store's entrances has a window with a floor-to-ceiling digital screen down which hearts tumble endlessly, as well as information about the discounts that tend to be a feature of this emporium.

The point of sale on the Valentine's merchandise states "Gifts designed For Love". These turn out to be anything from boxes of Ferrero Rocher or Milk Tray, perfume "for her" or some jaunty briefs ("for him", presumably).

This is probably the most in-your-face and overtly commercial Valentine's Day promotion in town at the moment and will probably suit the last-minute shopper on February 13.

**This is probably the most in-your-face and overtly commercial Valentine's Day promotion in town**



## John Lewis, St Pancras

After a while, red hearts, champagne and half-pint-sized cuddly toys begin to pall a little and it's quite hard not to wonder why John Lewis didn't opt to do something a little different in its freshly minted 'click-and-commute' store in St Pancras.

That said, it has given the promotion pride of place in its windows and on most of the equipment immediately inside the door.

Venture deeper into the store and things shift

towards a more traditional John Lewis take on stock, with little evidence of anything involving Cupid or his minions.

Credit, however, to John Lewis for taking on those in St Pancras for whom February 14 is a priority. Praise too for the small shelf-edge graphic that has a print of a watercolour heart with the message "Find the one – perfect gifts for Valentine's Day". It would be easy to miss this, but it is a touch of class.

