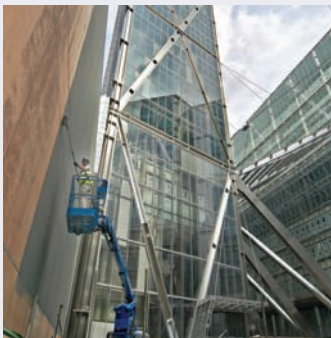


# Family

WORDS  
RICHARD MOORE

# MATTERS

IT WAS ALMOST HALF A CENTURY AGO THAT SAM LUCAS STARTED WORK IN THE BUILDING INDUSTRY AS A LABOURER AND HOD CARRIER. TODAY HE HEADS A FAMILY BUSINESS IN SEVENOAKS EMPLOYING HUNDREDS AND WITH AN ANNUAL TURNOVER OF AROUND £10MILLION.



When it comes to doing business Sam Lucas has a pretty straightforward approach; you work hard, do a top notch job and deliver on time. It's an ethos that has made his firm (S.Lucas) one of the leading specialist painting contractors in the country.

And that's no mean achievement for a man who had to borrow £50 to get his business off the ground.

"I was sub-contracting to a company working a site in Canning Town when the owner sadly died," recalls Sam. "The main contractor, Taylor Woodrow, asked me to finish the job at the same rates, which was a 50% increase for me personally."

Sam told them he didn't have the money to buy a compressor for paint spraying so the site agent lent him £50.

The rest, as they say, is history. But what a history!

Then aged 20, Sam started to specialise in spray painted coatings and textured ceilings. He formed his first Company (Sheridan Spray Specialists) in '71 and out of that came S.Lucas with a string of blue chip clients:

Heathrow Terminal Five, The Royal Shakespeare Theatre at Stratford-upon-Avon, St Pancras Station, the M15 headquarters in London and our very own Royal Victoria Place in '91.

The business, which has offices in Bethel Road, Sevenoaks, "provides specialist finishes and coatings to the building and construction industry as well as decoration services for private clients."

Sam, who at 65 is now Chairman of the Company says: "I learned from day one never to say 'no' to a client and to work 24/7 to deliver on time. It has not been unusual for me to work over the Christmas break including Christmas Day itself."

In fact it was around Christmas '69 that Sam (left) found himself outside London's Barbican site that had been shut down by a union dispute.

"Along with a few other self employed workers I climbed over the rear entrance and in a week earned today's equivalent of £5,000. It was a great Christmas."

The traits and values that helped build the business have been passed onto Sam's eight children... including Managing Director Danny Lucas who at 42 is the eldest.

"The other weekend Sam turned up out of the blue at one of our jobs and started working 100 feet up in the air on a cherry picker," says Danny. "He hates paperwork and just loves to get out on site." ➤



Danny (left) joined the company in '82 when he was 15 and started to learn the trade on site as a painter. He subsequently passed his City and Guilds trade qualification and went on to become Managing Director in '97.

Through the application of modern management techniques, together with use of the latest equipment and technology, he's ensured the Company has continued to grow, while still retaining the family's values and work ethics.

This is aptly illustrated when we ask Danny what project most stands out for him? There's no hesitation.

"The biggest buzz for me was in 91/92 when I took on my first project management role. It was with the pharmaceutical company Glaxo who were building a massive new research complex in Stevenage. At the time it was the biggest construction job in Europe and we were one of the sub-contractors.

"It was like a small town with 10 huge buildings and the idea was that different sub-contractors would be used on each one. They didn't want to put all their eggs in one basket.

"But as others fell down on the job we were asked to do more and ended up working on most of the buildings. Whatever they wanted doing, we did it. Whatever timetable needed to be met, we met it.

"For a year I lived in a nearby motel, worked seven days a week and had 200 blokes on site. I was 24. After that we had a 15 year purple patch working for major pharmaceutical companies."

S. Lucas can put hundreds of workers onto a site within days but has a permanent staff of about 60, including three of Sam's children

"One from each marriage," explains Sam whose current wife Jenny (formerly Jenny Lee Smith) was the first British Ladies Open Golf Champion. "There's Danny who as MD runs the company, then Adam (25) who runs large contracts and Katie (19) in admin. We're a hands on family business and I'm sure that's the key to our success."

What's striking about S.Lucas is the fact it's never lost touch with its grass roots.

Sam, for example, lived in Sunderland as a child and today still makes a round trip of 700 miles North at weekends to watch the town's football team. In '78 he was voted

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Sunderland Supporter of the Year for living in Kent and never missing a home.

Another example of staying in touch with your roots is the fact that today you can still ask S.Lucas for a quote to paint your front door or redecorate your hallway and they'll be more than happy to oblige. But why? Why not concentrate on the big money jobs?

"Because it keeps our feet firmly on the ground and gives us a buzz," says Danny. "We love working directly with local people and that side of our business is thriving.

"We put the same effort into painting your ceiling as we do painting Terminal Five and we offer really competitive rates. As a result we have clients who come back to us year after year for decorating jobs."

Danny is quick (and proud) to tell you that in his office he has letters from 200 local people thanking him and his team for their work. On the other hand he's reluctant to talk too much about his hobby; cars.

"I drive a Maserati Quattroporte but I'm not sure we should mention that as it might sound like I'm boasting or bragging." (In the end we agree it's ok because it's really a four door saloon version, nothing too flashy.)

To get across the sheer diversity of their work Danny is looking at new promotional material that talks about S.Lucas taking care of everything from 'Terminal Five at Heathrow...to Number Five down the road'.

"We really want people to understand that there's no difference in our approach to the big jobs and the smaller ones. We treat them all the same."

Danny and wife Debbie live in Tonbridge and have two children: Jakob (8) and Holly (6). Natural successors maybe?

"I would never force them to join the business but if they wanted to it would be brilliant."

Somehow, we think they might just want to do that... particularly if they've inherited their Grandad's values. SO

[Lucasuk.com](http://Lucasuk.com)

#### S. LUCAS BY NUMBERS :

<b>Established:</b>	1969
<b>Annual Turnover:</b>	£10million
<b>Staff on single project:</b>	Up to 300
<b>Paint used annually:</b>	100,000 litres (21,996 gallons)
<b>Biggest Job to date:</b>	Terminal Five (2nd The O2)
<b>Tallest building painted:</b>	Canary Wharf:250m/820ft
<b>Aspiration:</b>	To paint Shard of Glass (Europe's tallest building) 306m/1,003ft
<b>Phone number:</b>	01732 465 330