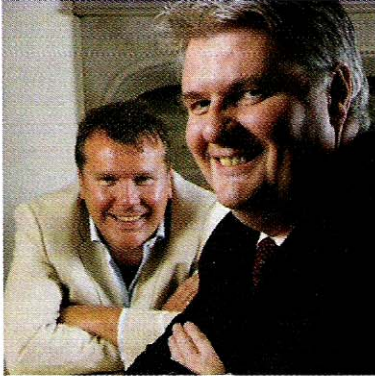
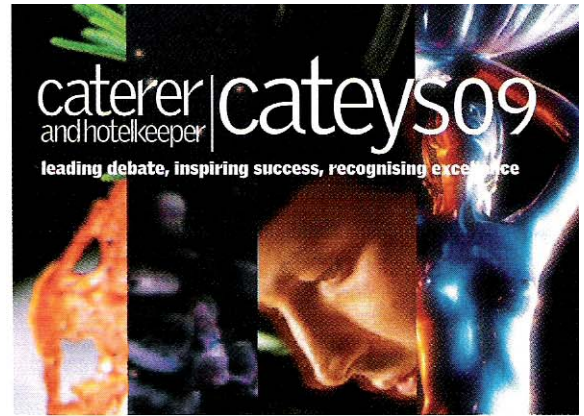


## Special Award

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## Nigel Haworth and Craig Bancroft

It's become commonplace to talk about local sourcing in UK food circles, but Nigel Haworth and Craig Bancroft have been championing Lancashire produce since long before it was fashionable to do so.

Over the past 25 years at their flagship hotel restaurant Northcote (formerly Northcote Manor), situated at Langho on the edge of the Pennine moors near Blackburn, Lancashire hotpot and Herdwick lamb have become as much a part of the furniture as the Edwardian detailing and the array of fireplaces.

Online it's a similar story, as a newly developed website for Northcote now lists five pages of "regional heroes", from poultry supplier Reg Johnson in Goosnargh to cheese producer Graham Kirkham.

And now the creation of the Ribble Valley Inns pub brand has taken the pair's food to a wider audience. Northcote was awarded a Michelin star in 1996, but in the decade since, they've opened a pub, the Three Fishes, in Mitton, Lancashire, in 2004; launched the nearby Highwayman late in 2006; and the Clog and Billycock in Pleasington, near Blackburn, in 2008.

Then, in June, Haworth and Bancroft took the lease for a site near Skipton in Yorkshire, at the Bull at Broughton. It's a bold step across Pennine boundaries, and the pair might be betraying their Lancashire-only model, but in bringing the quality of their offering to a larger audience, many locals will surely forgive them.

After all, Haworth and Bancroft have also developed an outside catering company, Northcote Offsite, which has a con-

tract with Blackburn Rovers Football Club, feeding up to 1,000 people at a time at corporate events and weddings.

Haworth is involved in Chefs Sans Frontiers, a group of chefs who promote the North-west of England with demonstrations in Paris, Barcelona and London, as well as being a member of the Academy of Culinary Arts and part of the Masterchefs of Great Britain. Warrick Dodds, Northcote's head chef, has won the American Express Young Chef of the Year award and was a finalist in the Roux Scholarship. Northcote's sous chef, Jason Birbeck, has also won the American Express competition.

The pair have worked their way through the industry, too. Born in Accrington, Lancashire, Haworth worked at the Grosvenor House hotel in London and the Royal Berkshire in Ascot, as well as Gleneagles in Perthshire, and in Switzerland under Natalie Viscardie at Schweizerhof. He took on the head chef role at Northcote Manor in 1984, becoming joint managing director and a 50% shareholder in 1989. His now partner Bancroft was already in place, having arrived at Northcote a year earlier. Already he had spent time as a Trusthouse Forte trainee at the Grosvenor House hotel, and the Plaza Athénée in Paris, also working at Brown's hotel and the Westbury in London.

Haworth and Bancroft have managed sustained success at Northcote, but the pair have also taken on new challenges recently, and it's this quality of building on an outstanding legacy that leads us to give the coveted Special Award to the Northcote duo.

### The Judges

Nominations for the Special Award were compiled from recommendations by *Caterer and Hotelkeeper* readers and from suggestions from each of the Catey judging panels. The judging panel was made up of members of the *Caterer* and *Caterersearch.com* editorial teams.