

# The Merchants Trust PLC

As focused on dividends as you are



## Aim

The Trust's objective is to provide an above average level of income, income growth and long-term growth of capital through a policy of investing mainly in higher yielding large UK companies.

## History

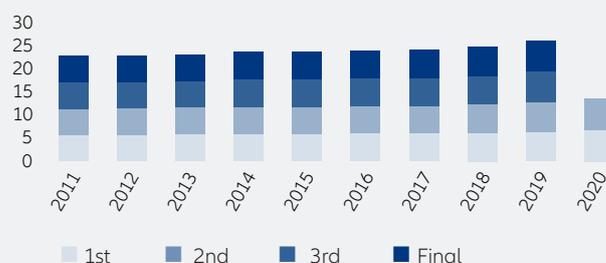
The Merchants Trust PLC was incorporated in February 1889, making it the oldest of the investment trusts in the Allianz Global Investors stable. Initially it invested in the fixed interest securities of railway companies in the USA, Canada and South America, but now concentrates primarily on major UK companies with an above average rate of dividend yield.

## Trust Benefits

Merchants has for many years focused on a simple proposition to deliver a high and rising income together with capital growth for its shareholders. Simon Gergel has been managing the trust for ten years, investing in a diversified portfolio of large, well-established and well-known UK companies. Although past performance is no guide to the future, Merchants has paid increasingly higher dividends to its shareholders year on year for the last 37 years.

## Ten Year Dividend History

### Dividend Record in Pence per Share To Year End 31 January



### Last Four Dividend Payments per Share

Record Date	Pay Date	Dividend	Type
04.10.2019	12.11.2019	6.80p	2nd Quarterly
12.07.2019	20.08.2019	6.70p	1st Quarterly
12.04.2019	22.05.2019	6.60p	Final
01.02.2019	06.03.2019	6.50p	3rd Quarterly

Past performance is not a reliable indicator of future results.



A ranking, a rating or an award provides no indicator of future performance and is not constant over time.

The RSMR rating is designed for use by professional advisers and intermediaries as part of their advice process. This rating is not a recommendation to buy. If you need further information or are in doubt then you should consult a professional adviser.

**Total Assets** £641.8m

**Shares in Issue** 110,028,464 (Ordinary 25p)

**Market Cap** £510.0m

Share Price

**463.5p**

NAV per Share

**450.4p**

Premium/-Discount

**2.9%**

Dividend Yield

**5.6%**

Gearing

**20.6%**

**Share Price** is the price of a single ordinary share, as determined by the stock market. The share price above is the mid-market price at market close.

**Net Asset Value (NAV) per Share** is calculated as available shareholders' funds divided by the number of shares in issue, with shareholders' funds taken to be the net value of all the company's assets after deducting liabilities.

The NAV figure above is based on the fair/

market value cum income of the company's long-term debt and preference shares (known as debt at market value). This allows for the valuation of long-term debt and preference shares at fair value or current market price, rather than at final repayment value (known as debt at par).

**Premium/Discount.** Since investment company shares are traded on a stock market, the share price that you get may be higher or lower than the NAV. The difference is known as a premium or discount.

**Dividend Yield** is calculated using the latest full year dividend divided by the current share price.

**Gearing** is a measure of a company's financial leverage and shows the extent to which its operations are funded by lenders versus shareholders.

## Fund Manager's Review

August was a difficult month for stock markets, with concerns about escalating trade tensions between the USA and China, leading to reduced forecasts for global economic growth. In the UK, political uncertainty continued, with Prime Minister Johnson announcing a prorogation of Parliament, which seemed designed to make it more difficult for his political opponents to stop Brexit from happening on 31<sup>st</sup> October. Bond markets and gold were very strong, with bond yields falling sharply. These were seen as "safe haven" assets, and were supported by hopes of further interest rate cuts and expectations of lower inflation, whilst equity markets weakened.

The stock market was led down by financial sectors including life insurance and banks, which are sensitive to falling government bond yields, as well as the resources sectors such as oil & gas producers and mining. The best performing sectors were typically defensive sectors like health care, pharmaceuticals, personal goods, mobile telecommunications and utilities.

Greene King received a takeover bid from an overseas investor. This is just one of a number of takeover bids that have been made for UK companies in recent months. Investors, private equity firms and corporate buyers are finding value in the UK stock market as many UK shares have been de-rated, due to fears over Brexit in particular. The weakness of sterling has made UK assets look particularly attractive to overseas investors, on a longer term view

Although the underlying portfolio of stocks produced a return that would be ahead of the benchmark, negative contributions from gearing and the

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recent debt refinancing meant the NAV total return was -5.6%, against a benchmark return of -3.6%. There were some notable contributing stock performances, with pub company Greene King rallying by 40% on the bid. Other strong performers included Hammerson and Imperial Brands. There were fewer negative performance contributors, but Standard Life Aberdeen and Legal & General were weak, along with the life insurance sector. Also, not owning AstraZeneca had an impact on relative performance as it was a strong performer, helping to support the stock market.

We took advantage of volatility in the market to add to a number of shareholdings at attractive levels. In particular we added to the real estate stocks Landsec and Hammerson, construction company Balfour Beatty and the car distribution company Inchcape. This was funded by reducing the Greene King holding after the takeover bid, and taking profits on companies, such as Meggitt, Informa, BAE Systems and GlaxoSmithKline, which have been strong performers and moved closer to fair value.

The stock market is extremely polarised in the UK. Normally, active investors arbitrage opportunities, selling highly valued companies to buy



### Simon Gergel, Portfolio Manager

The Merchants Trust PLC is managed by Simon Gergel who is Chief Investment Officer at AllianzGI and has 27 years investment experience. He is pictured here with Matthew Tillet, UK equity portfolio manager. Simon joined AllianzGI in April 2006 from HSBC Halbis Partners where he managed over £900m in high income funds as well as core institutional and life UK equity portfolios. Prior to joining HSBC, Simon worked for 14 years at Phillips & Drew Fund Management / UBS Asset Management.

cheaper ones. This process keeps the market relatively efficient. However this process is not working effectively at the moment. Investment flows are either going into passive strategies that buy the whole market, or into "quality" and "growth" strategies which are largely valuation insensitive. Many years ago Benjamin Graham famously described the stock market as a voting machine in the short term but a weighing machine in the long term. Currently investors voting with their money are overpowering the weighing process.

History has shown, over a long period of time that buying shares on low valuations tends to deliver outperformance, and we believe that this will prove true in the future too. Having said that, careful analysis of business franchises, competitive forces, technological changes and environmental, social and governance risks remains critical to differentiate between cheap companies, and "value traps": companies that appear cheap but for good reason.

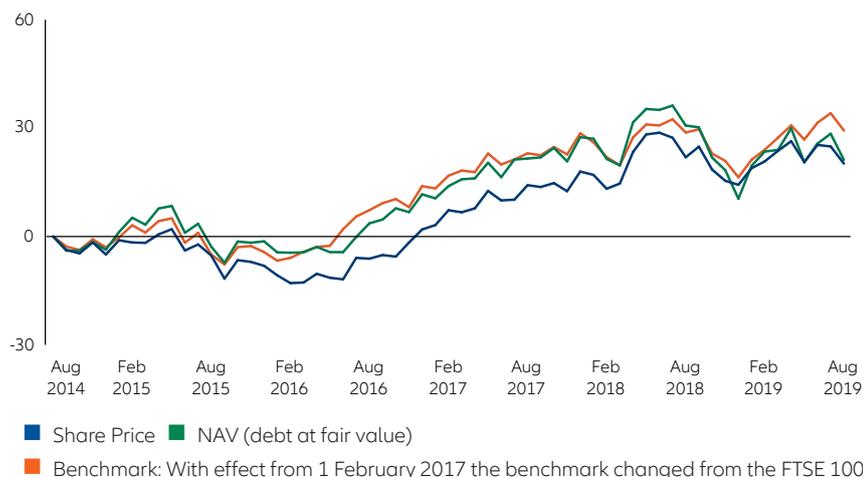
We have constructed a portfolio of companies listed in the UK but with operations spread across many different industries, both in the UK and internationally. This provides the portfolio with a high level of diversification, whilst also being differentiated from the broad UK stock market. We believe that given the fundamental strengths of the businesses in the portfolio and their current low valuations, the prospects for capital growth in the medium term are promising. The portfolio pays a high yield and, in aggregate, is delivering a decent level of dividend growth, supporting Merchants' objective of paying a high and rising dividend yield.

**Simon Gergel**  
**13 September 2019**

**This is no recommendation or solicitation to buy or sell any particular security. Any security mentioned above will not necessarily be comprised in the portfolio by the time this document is disclosed or at any other subsequent date.**

## Performance Track Record

### Five Year Performance (%)



### Risk & Features

Investment trusts are quoted companies listed on the London Stock Exchange. Their share prices are determined by factors including the balance of supply and demand in the market.

Merchants seeks to enhance returns for its shareholders through gearing which can boost the Trust's returns when investments perform well, though losses can be magnified when investments lose value. You should be aware that this Trust may be subject to sudden and large falls in value and you could suffer substantial capital loss.

Derivatives may be used to manage the Trust efficiently.

### Cumulative Returns (%)

	3M	6M	1Y	3Y	5Y
Share Price	-0.4	-0.5	-1.4	28.0	20.2
NAV (debt at fair value)	0.6	-1.9	-7.3	16.9	21.2
Benchmark	2.0	4.3	0.4	20.5	29.3

### Discrete 12 Month Returns to 31 August (%)

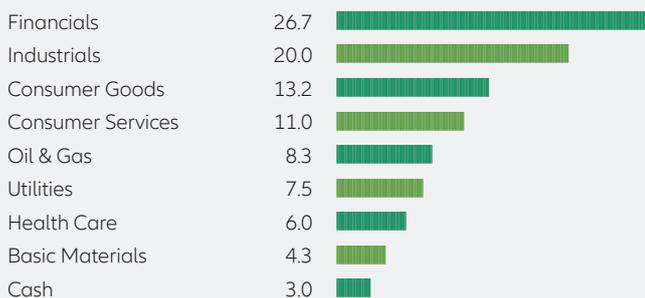
	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015
Share Price	-1.4	6.8	21.7	-0.9	-5.3
NAV (debt at fair value)	-7.3	7.5	17.3	6.7	-2.8
Benchmark	0.4	4.7	14.6	13.0	-5.0

Source: Thomson Reuters DataStream, percentage growth, mid to mid, total return to 31.08.19. Copyright 2019 © DataStream, a Thomson Reuters company. All rights reserved. DataStream shall not be liable for any errors or delays in the content, or for any actions taken in reliance thereon.

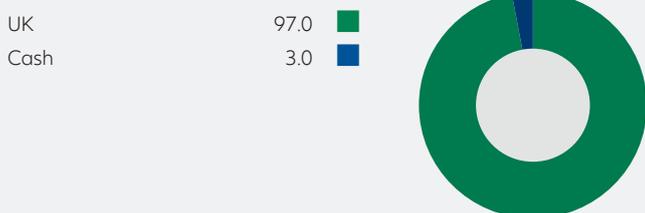
Past performance is not a reliable indicator of future returns. You should not make any assumptions on the future on the basis of performance information. The value of an investment and the income from it can fall as well as rise as a result of market fluctuations and you may not get back the amount originally invested. This investment trust charges 65% of its annual management fee to the capital account and 35% to revenue. This could lead to a higher level of income but capital growth will be constrained as a result.

## Portfolio Breakdown

### Sector Breakdown (%)



### Geographic Breakdown (%)



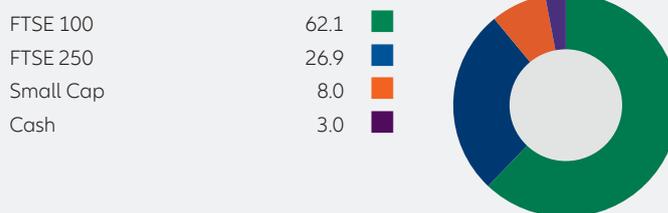
### Top Ten Holdings (%)

GlaxoSmithKline	6.0
Royal Dutch Shell - B Shares	5.8
Imperial Brands	4.7
BAE Systems	3.8
HSBC Holdings	3.7
British American Tobacco	3.6
CRH	2.8
Standard Life Aberdeen	2.8
Scottish & Southern Energy	2.8
Barclays	2.7

Total number of holdings\* 45

\*Excludes derivatives

### Market Cap Breakdown (%)



The data shown is not constant over time and the allocation may change in the future. Totals may not sum to 100.0% due to rounding. This is no recommendation or solicitation to buy or sell any particular security.

## Key Information

Launch Date	16 February 1889
AIC Sector	UK Equity Income
Benchmark	FTSE All-Share
Annual Management Charge	0.35%
Performance Fee	No
Ongoing Charges <sup>1</sup>	0.58%
Year End	31 January
Annual Financial Report	Final published in April, Half-yearly published in September
AGM	May
NAV Frequency	Daily
Dividends	February/March, May, August, November
Price Information	Financial Times, The Daily Telegraph, <a href="http://www.merchantstrust.co.uk">www.merchantstrust.co.uk</a>
Company Secretary	Kirsten Salt
Investment Manager	Simon Gergel, CIO, UK Equities
Codes	RIC: MRCH.L SEDOL: 0580007

1. Source: AIC, as at the Trust's Financial Year End (31.01.2019). Ongoing Charges (previously Total Expense Ratios) are published annually to show operational expenses incurred in the running of the company but excluding financing costs.

## Board of Directors

Colin Clark (Chairman)  
Timon Drakesmith (Chairman of the Audit Committee)  
Mary Ann Sieghart  
Sybella Stanley (Senior Independent Director)  
Paul Yates

## How to invest

You can buy shares in the Trust through:

- A third party provider - see 'How to Invest' on our website, where you will find links to a range of these platforms, many of which allow you to hold the shares within an ISA, Junior ISA, SIPP and/or savings scheme.
- A stockbroker.
- A financial adviser.

## Contact us

If you have any queries regarding our investment trusts our Investor Services team can be contacted on:

0800 389 4696

[www.merchantstrust.co.uk](http://www.merchantstrust.co.uk)

**E-mail: [investment-trusts@allianzgi.com](mailto:investment-trusts@allianzgi.com)**

You will find much more information about The Merchants Trust on our website.

Please note that we can only offer information and are unable to provide investment advice. You should contact your financial adviser before making any investment decision.



**Investing involves risk. The value of an investment and the income from it may fall as well as rise and investors may not get back the full amount invested.** The views and opinions expressed herein, which are subject to change without notice, are those of the issuer and/or its affiliated companies at the time of publication. The data used is derived from various sources, and assumed to be correct and reliable, but it has not been independently verified; its accuracy or completeness is not guaranteed and no liability is assumed for any direct or consequential losses arising from its use, unless caused by gross negligence or wilful misconduct. The conditions of any underlying offer or contract that may have been or will be made or concluded shall prevail.

**All data source Allianz Global Investors as at 31.08.19 unless otherwise stated.**

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