

The Northern Echo

ne

The lifestyle magazine  
for the North-East

JANUARY 2004

ME AND MY  
WARDROBE  
Lesley Keneally

GARDENING  
New Year's  
resolutions

FITNESS  
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# ne contents

22



16



12

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3

#### SHARON GRIFFITHS

The alternative  
tourist's season

4

#### INTERIORS

Just take  
a butcher's

7

#### SIX OF THE BEST

Hands-free  
mobile phones

8

#### SHOPPING

The twins who sell  
bridal wear

10

#### GARDENING

This year I shall make  
a big effort to...

11

#### DIY

New Year,  
new layout

12

#### FASHION

Grown-up dresses for  
sophisticated women

14

#### ME AND MY WARDROBE

Kate Saint

15

#### BEAUTY

Barbara's bespoke  
beauty products

16

#### MOTORING

Cruising with  
Chrysler

18

#### GADGET MAN

What will be  
hot in 2004

19

#### FOOD

The public  
house virgins

20

#### FITNESS

How to get fit  
on holiday

21

#### NE CONNECTIONS

Sailing into  
endless summer

22

#### COFFEE TIME

Crossword and  
puzzles, **PLUS** the  
chance to win a  
luxury night away at  
Crathorne Hall



CHAMELEON  
MIRRORS

# sharon griffiths

“In winter waiters look pleased to see you. Now there’s a novelty...”

NE window shopping

## LOUNGE IN LUXURY

IF you’re looking for a talking point for the home this year, leading traditional furniture maker Hepple may have the answer – a luxurious ostrich hide chair. The Hexham-based firm, the only furniture company in the country to use ostrich hide, produces a stylish contemporary version of a traditional tub chair – perfect for lounging in – called the Ingram.

Beautifully finished in this luxurious and unusual leather, the Ingram is definitely a gentleman’s chair as Mike Bottomley, from Hepple, explains.

“This design is favoured by men and has been popular with Gentlemen’s Clubs around the country,” he says. “It is an incredibly comfortable chair with a contemporary look that is perfectly suited for general lounging in front of the TV, or in a games room or study. It really will last for life.”

Built using a kiln-dried beech frame, the chair is made using traditional methods – hand-tied



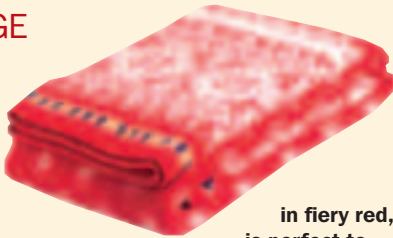
springs, webbed base, horse-hair and lambs wool all feature. The seat area and arms are covered in ostrich hide with a contrast fabric, usually suede, on the outside. The chair is finished with individual French nailed antiqued studs, which are available in brass or nickel finish.

The ostrich hide comes in a range of colours, from all shades of brown to black. The chair costs from £1,850. For further information call Hepple on 01434 602 260 or visit [www.hepple.co.uk](http://www.hepple.co.uk)

## BLANKET COVERAGE

THE Scandinavian blond woods have always been IKEA’s trademark, but this year Scandinavian craft and design have taken on a more colourful look at the store.

This bright, folksy blanket reminds us of the ice and snow around at this time of year, but



in fiery red, is perfect to cosy up in. The Nordic-style Ellen Sno Blanket costs £19 from IKEA.

**F**UNNY month January. On the one hand you’ve made all those resolutions about eating healthily and joining the gym, or swimming before breakfast and walking to work.

And on the other hand, there are still some of those delicious Christmas chocs left, not to mention a chunk of Christmas cake and a bottle or two.

Meanwhile, it’s still dark for so long and just as you’re snuggling into a nice warm comforting jumper, thinking that maybe hibernation is a very clever idea, the television is full of holiday ads and the brochures are thudding through the door.

Time to go travelling...

Not just in the summer, but now. Right now. Before you eat another slice of leftover Christmas cake that you don’t really want.

January and February aren’t just the time to go long haul, seeking sun – very nice though that may be. This is the ideal time for seeing cities, especially cities close to home.

Think about it. From Easter onwards cities are full of tourists with backpacks pushing you off the pavement. In the autumn they’re full of Christmas shoppers with bulging shopping bags that push you off the pavements. If you go then, you don’t actually see the city – just the crowds.

You might, if you’re very lucky, sneak a week between those two – but then you meet all the other people who had the same bright idea. Or you hit half term and all is chaos.

So, once the sales are over, now’s the time to go.

Cities are best in winter, when you need a constant supply of shops and galleries for distraction, and plenty of cafes, bars and restaurants to dive into when it starts to rain or snow. And in winter, you can even get a seat. Waiters look pleased to see you. Now there’s a novelty.

Doesn’t matter if it gets dark early, because everywhere’s all lit up, which all adds to the general cheeriness.

You needn’t go far. York is always better in the winter. If you haven’t been to the Baltic in Gateshead and walked over the blinking eye bridge to Newcastle, then now

is the time. Have you seen how Leeds has changed in the last five years? And Harvey Nicks is always worth a visit.

London last January was bizarre. The place was deserted. Partly because it was January and partly because the Americans had just seen TV pictures of tanks at Heathrow and decided to stay at home. But what made it really strange was that there were no queues. I walked straight into the Royal Academy and was able to wander around looking at exhibitions in perfect peace. Afterwards I strolled over to Fortnum’s and not only was there no queue, but the only other people taking tea were an Italian family, and actress Sheila Hancock (who really does have the most amazing cheekbones).

But it was wonderful. No queuing, no barging, no waiting. It was London as it was meant to be. A bit like a Richard Curtis film really. I almost expected Hugh Grant to come leaping up the steps.

One summer in Florence I queued for two hours to get into the Uffizi Gallery. The day was hot and sticky and as we shuffled forward in the sun, I thought I was going to faint and by the time I got in there were so many sweaty bodies between me and the paintings that I hardly saw a thing. But in February, not only did I not have to queue, but I had entire rooms to myself. Talk about privileged...

Venice was eerie and empty – just me and the pigeons in St Mark’s Square. It doesn’t smell so much in the winter either.

And in Canterbury, I wandered into the cathedral just as a visiting choir was starting a rehearsal. For the handful of other visitors there that day, it was a splendid free concert.

We think of going on outings in the summer. But, especially if we have a summer like last year, if it’s hot and sunny, it hardly seems worth leaving your own garden, much too much effort in the heat. If you do get out, the last place you want to be in summer is on hot, crowded city pavements.

But now is the perfect time to cheer yourself up with a little spot of city spotting.

Just do it quickly – before everyone else has the same idea.

# lifestyle



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**NE interiors** IN ASSOCIATION WITH



An aerial view of the house, far left. Main picture: Denise in the sitting room

## Just take a butcher's...

Doing up a house can be a worthwhile experience in terms of personal rewards and financial gain. IAN LAMMING looks through the keyhole of a family home transformed from a derelict shop

**T**HERE is house proud and there is house proud and as Denise Ashcroft shows off the "before" while standing in the "after" it is easy to see why she is so pleased with herself.

An album of photographs reveals the potential she spotted in a rundown farm house in County Durham 15 years ago. The stone-built Grade II listed building, dating back to the 18th century, was a ruin. The previous occupant, an elderly lady, lived her final days in the only habitable bedroom.

"The roof was full of holes and one day we found an upstairs bedroom covered in a layer of snow," recalls Denise, of Aycliffe Village, near Darlington. "It was horrendous, you couldn't live in it, everything was rotten. There was no electricity, the gas was condemned as dangerous and it was full of obsolete appliances. But we fell in love with it as soon as we saw it as we could see the potential."

Fifteen years on and it's a different story, a different century, a different house. What began as a £44,000 shell, the sad remnant of an old butcher's shop, has been transformed by Denise and her husband David into a characterful modern home which has just been valued at £300,000.

It's an achievement they can both be proud of because they did the lion's share of the work themselves. "I did all the decorating. My dad and uncle used to be painters and decorators and they taught me. Dave is a quantity and building surveyor and is quite knowledgeable about the trade. He's a very patient man and rewired the whole house using



instruction manuals. If he got stuck he asked advice from friends who were electricians. He also took every bit of render off the outside to reveal the stonework and made all the architrave and skirting boards himself. I am good at making lists of things we needed to buy. I then went around comparing prices and it's amazing how much money you can save by shopping around."

Even doing the bulk of the work themselves, the transformation has cost more than £70,000. "Still, if you are prepared to live in a mess, it can be a money-maker," she says. "But we didn't get into it for profit, we did it for ourselves."

Tug on the metal bell pull on the outside of the house and the solid front door will be opened revealing a home of many themes. Turn right from the hallway into the front room and the visitor enters a small part of Asia. "We got married out in Hong Kong and honeymooned in Bali, Singapore, Thailand and Malaysia, buying ourselves presents in every place," says Denise. These now reside in the front





room where Chinese dogs and lions vie with ginger jars, bamboo lamps and a dragon rug to provide the Asian effect. In one corner, under a light coating of mist, sits a feng shui water feature of greenery, rocks and bubbling fountain. "I had a car accident and hurt my neck and back. The water feature helps me relax," explains Denise.

Indonesian-style carved double doors lead from the lounge to the playroom, a former tool shed, now part of the house. Behind one door sits a downstairs loo – but mind your head – behind another, a tiny office area, while french doors lead out on to a patio.

Across the hall lies the dining room, quintessentially olde worlde to fit in with the age of the house, and sporting solid, chunky wooden furniture. There's a piano and a Delft rack, an old Singer sewing machine, original shutters and a solid wooden chest. The room is dominated by a stone fireplace and log burner, while it is lit by two iron chandeliers.

Move deeper into the house to find the kitchen, which is pure farmhouse-style. "We can't stand electrical appliances on show so everything is hidden away to be in keeping with the house," Denise says. Stone floors, the original range, a Belfast sink, butcher's block, a cartwheel, exposed

**Thinking back, there are bad memories and we got very stressed at times but we would definitely do it all again**



The kitchen, where all modern appliances are hidden away, and the olde worlde dining room

► Continued on page 6





**Pure indulgence: black tiles and a huge corner Jacuzzi dominate the bathroom**

► **Continued from page 5**

timbers and sold wooden fittings give it the right atmosphere. Outside the back door is a walled garden featuring wishing well and stone toolshed, a suntrap in the summer, says Denise.

Wide stairs lead past an attractive arched landing window to the upstairs. On the wall is an old deed saying the house was sold in 1873 for £1,400. The bathroom is pure decadence with opulent black tiles and a huge corner Jacuzzi, a corner shower and large basin. "The walls were so uneven we used ten buckets of grout to put on the tiles," recalls Denise.

The master bedroom has an African theme with photographs of warriors adorning the walls, along with wooden masks and a picture of a witch doctor. The middle bedroom reveals 21-year-old daughter Louise's love of dance with a massive mirror and barre on one wall. The third bedroom belongs to Samantha, five, and is like entering a jungle with a canopy of leaves covering the ceiling, elephant and monkey mural and the radiator transformed into a jungle jeep.

Climb the precipitous space saver stairs to the attic and the family games room is reached, packed with bar, fruit machine, snooker table and darts board. "We have had some good times up here," says Denise. "You have to be careful with the stairs, though I've only fallen down them once."

All told it's a miraculous transformation, the album of 'before' pictures telling a remarkable story of 15 years toil to make a house to be proud of. "Thinking back, there are bad memories and we got very stressed at times but we would definitely do it all again," says Denise.

Just as well, as she might have to – the family is considering moving north to be nearer David's office.

Pictures: MIKE GIBB



**Top left: Louise's bedroom with dancing barre and mirror; centre left, the games room at the top of the house; left, the master bedroom. Above: five-year-old Samantha's jungle-themed room**





Clockwise from above: Burlington surround from Chesney's; the Urchin by Cathy Burkeman; the Orchid from CVO, costing £4,500 and which doesn't need a chimney or catalytic converter



# The future of firecraft

Put simply, fires are hot property again. GABRIELLE FAGAN reports

**N**OT only do the flickering flames of a fire bring a room alive, particularly in the depths of winter, but it also provides a warming and soothing focal point.

No stylish home is complete without one and there's never been a wider choice. So if you feel you've missed out this season, take your pick from the huge variety and get it installed in the warmer months.

If your taste is chic and modern, Bedale-based CVO Firevault is renowned for its elegant, decorative designs which include golden bowls of flame, rippling trays of fire, or a single, striking iridescent flame.

The company probably became best known for the Firebowl and the Slit and Slab, a letter box type opening in a wall, which can glow with flame and is ideal for that minimalist space. One of their most popular new models is the Fire Ribbon, which is a stunning centrepiece in itself. It costs £4,250 plus installation.

And if you have no chimney – no problem. CVO's new Flueless collection burns so cleanly that there is no need for a chimney or catalytic converter. Alternatively, there is the Gel Flame vessel or pod, which burns organic gel. The pod costs £995, and a complete installation including the box and hearth is £4,495. Gell pots are £3 each and burn for around three hours.

Company founder, Durham-born Carolyn Van Outersterp says: "The trend for simple designs continues but there are more glamorous touches this season. Glossy and reflective materials for the surrounds and fire holders accentuate the natural beauty of the flames. Sleek, polished surrounds lend themselves to both contemporary and classic interiors."

"We live in the North-East, where there has always been a strong tradition of manufacturing, and we have used much of the heritage of the region – the shipbuilding and foundry casting traditions – in our designs," says Christian Van Outersterp.

The company now sells to owners of



The Agorafocus 630 from Diligence, which costs £3,499

multi-million pound properties in London and abroad, and pictures of CVO fires appear in all the top interior magazines and glossy Sunday supplements.

Diligence is another company with styles that make a burning impression. It has a collection of more than 40 Focus pieces, with gas and solid fuel options, which are made to order. They can be centrally positioned, wall and corner mounted, built in or – perhaps the ultimate statement – the rotating, podlike Bathyscafocus. From £1,500.

If you really feel experimental there is a beautiful fire, The Urchin by sculptor Cathy Burkeman. It resembles the sea creature in shape and fire licks through the spokes creating a constantly changing fire picture. It is one in her series of 'hot rod' fires and costs from £1,250.

Chesney's originally made its reputation restoring antique fireplaces but is now famous for its huge and stylish collection of both original and reproduction traditional surrounds and fires. It also has an interesting contemporary collection. Owner Paul Chesney says: "We are finding that people are turning away from just that hole-in-the-wall look, which appears brilliant in a magazine but can be a little

bleak and harsh to live with."

His latest fireplace, the Burlington, is intended for those looking for a design with timeless appeal. It is in hand carved limestone and costs from £1,468.

Fireplace manufacturers, Elgin & Hall, of Hunton, near Bedale, have launched a bespoke service for customers who want a unique fireplace created to their own design.

The company already offers more than 60 different finishes for their fireplaces but this will take the process even further. Janet Stevens, design director says: "Customers can bring along three samples of colours and textures from their room to one of our dealerships. Our designers will take into account the room's dimensions and the mood people are seeking and produce a choice of three looks."

A fire surround created using the service will cost between £100 to £175 more than a standard surround.

British Gas also has a wide and affordable collection of contemporary and classic mantels and surrounds with fires to match.

Finally, don't neglect the humble stove. It is making a comeback because it's a good looking alternative to a gas or electric fire. Morso, the Danish creators of cast iron gas and solid fuel stoves, offer a wide selection of sleek models that take it a world away from its basic and historical origins.

So turn the lights down low, keep the temperature up and enjoy a chill free style-hot sanctuary this winter.

**CVO Firevault.** Call: (01748) 821708; (01677) 450111 or visit [www.cvo.co.uk](http://www.cvo.co.uk)

**Elgin & Hall.** Call: 01677 450 100/[www.elgin.co.uk](http://www.elgin.co.uk).

**Diligence,** 22 East Street, Ashburton. Call: 01364 654 716 or visit [www.diligenceinternational.com](http://www.diligenceinternational.com)

**Chesney's.** Call: 020 7627 1410 or visit [www.chesneys.co.uk](http://www.chesneys.co.uk)

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## 6 OF THE BEST

### HANDS-FREE PHONES

**WATCH** out folks, it's now a specific offence to use a hand-held mobile phone in a moving vehicle. The penalty will be a £30 fixed penalty or up to £1,000 on conviction in court. For a detailed explanation of the new law, check out [www.lawontheweb.co.uk](http://www.lawontheweb.co.uk) but in the meantime, it's time we all took heed and invested in a safer way of using our mobile phones. Here's a selection of the best solutions on offer:

#### SPEAKING SPEAKER Pama Clip n'Go (£19.99)

A simple solution to the problem of holding your mobile phone. This unit uses an acoustic clip which goes on your handset and amplifies through a separate speaker. Just plug it in to your cigar lighter with its in-car holder and most handset users will find this one compatible.



#### BLUETOOTH BANTER Jabra Bluetooth Headset (£49.99)

A stylish headset that allows you to use your mobile without any wires, whether it's in your bag or in its car-holder. Buttons on the headset let you pick up and put down calls. If your phone has voice-activation, you can even dial numbers without touching your handset.



#### CRYSTAL CLEAR CHAT Pama Professional Carkit (£59.99, or £99.99 with installation)

For the clearest conversations you can't beat a properly installed car kit. Your handset continues to charge whilst in the hands-free cradle and when it rings the radio mutes and your caller's voice comes through your in-car speakers – smart stuff.



#### RABBIT LIKE A PARROT Pama Plug n'Go (£39.99)

Simply plug this strange-looking unit into your cigar lighter and it acts as a microphone, speaker and charger. An absolute breeze to install but only compatible with certain handsets.



#### STANDARD SOLUTION Basic Personal hands-free kits (prices vary)

These units are sometimes supplied with handsets and basically act like Walkman headphones. The real trouble with these is that to comply with the new laws you will need to use them with an in-car cradle as you can't hold your mobile at all – a cheaper solution for those of you with more than one car perhaps.

#### KING OF THE ROAD Motorola Bluetooth (£99.99)

At the top end of the hands-free market is this Bluetooth set. Compatible with all Bluetooth phones, this technology has been waiting for this kind of law to be passed before it really started to get noticed.



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## NE shopping

Twins Nicola and Paula McDonald are helping North-East brides to find their perfect wedding dress. CHRISTEN PEARS reports



# A happy couple

**W**HAT little girl doesn't dream of her wedding day – and what could more important on that day than her dress? We've all fantasised about the moment the organ starts playing, all eyes turn to the back of the church and we begin the walk up the aisle, radiant in the most exquisite gown. But finding the perfect dress isn't easy, largely because of the bewilderingly large array on offer. Even Princess Diana, with a huge army of advisers at her disposal, later said she regretted choosing her voluminous, fairytale princess gown.

But twins Nicola and Paula McDonald are helping brides-to-be to find their dream dress. The 30-year-olds, neither of whom is married, have just opened their second Wedding Essentials store, this time in Newcastle.

The shop is a former art gallery, with an arched window, mirrored by arches at the back of the store that are vaguely suggestive of a church setting. The room is long and narrow, and the walls are lined with rails of dresses in traditional whites and creams as well as soft pinks, blues and reds. Some are sleek, column

dresses, others full and traditional with long trains. They are embellished with delicate beadwork, sequins and embroidery.

The first shop opened in Sunderland three-and-a-half years ago and has attracted customers from across the region.

Nicola says: "We looked around at the competition and found out what was available for brides. We realised that most people in the industry were a lot older than we were. We are probably more of the age of the brides and can relate more to their interests. We also found there was a gap in the market for something a bit more personal."

Both sisters have a background in retail. Nicola worked for Dixons for several years, while Paula had jobs with various companies. Their experience has been invaluable in running their own business and they have already won awards but opening in Newcastle takes the twins into uncharted territory.

"I think we know our customers in Sunderland very well but the market might be completely different here. We have to listen to what the customers want," says Nicola.

Designers include Amanda Wyatt, Augusta Jones, Ronald Joyce and Paloma Blanca, and although fashions don't change as quickly as on the catwalk, there are distinctive trends.

Paula says: "There are so many different venues now people have to find the most suitable dress. Not everyone wants the full skirt and big train. A lot of girls get married abroad. They want something simple."

Strapless styles are still popular and a

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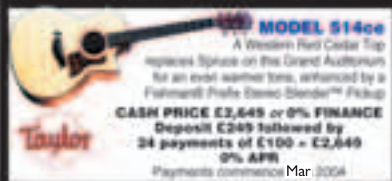
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market teas that they forget there's a world of exquisite flavours out there," says Linda. Order on 0845 450 4025 or on the website: [www.reallylindabarker.co.uk](http://www.reallylindabarker.co.uk)

NE window shopping

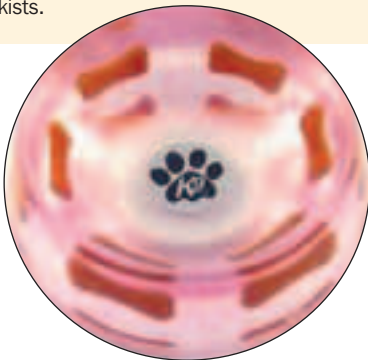


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## SUPER BOWL

PROBABLY the coolest dog bowl in the world also comes from the same company. Made from highly durable polyresin, this bowl is extremely stylish and extremely heavy so you won't have the age old problem of your dog chasing the bowl round the kitchen at dinner time. £29.99 from [www.altgifts.com](http://www.altgifts.com).



thing we want is for someone to feel uncomfortable walking up the aisle."

Women tend to get married later in life these days and are more certain about what they want but some are quite intimidated walking into a bridal shop for the first time. Nicola and Paula are quick to put them at their ease. They allow them to browse for a while and only when they start to feel comfortable do they begin asking questions.

"The first thing to sort out is the style. We can tell pretty quickly what's going to suit and that can be quite difficult if they have a fixed idea that we know won't look right. They have to put their trust in us," explains Paula.

Their techniques obviously work. They've struck up friendships with several clients and have been invited to even more weddings. Nicola is godmother to one former customer's baby.

"It's really rewarding when people come back to show you the photos and you see everything as it was on the day. When it goes well, you know you've been a part of it and that's a fantastic feeling."

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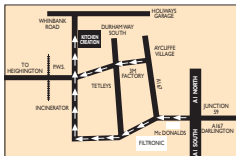
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Gardening Correspondent BRIGID PRESS comes up with some New Year's Resolutions

# This year I shall make a big effort to...

## 1 Wait till the worst of the frosts have done their bit before pruning the roses back...

It is so tempting to shape them up ready for the spring, but it only promotes the growth of new shoots, which may then get damaged by the cold. This damage can become sites for the entry of disease and infection.



## 2 Limit my selection of garden vegetable seeds to a manageable level...

ALL too often I am tempted to try as many different varieties as possible. They all get sown and pricked out, but then I run out of potting compost, space in the greenhouse, room in the borders and time and energy.

## 3 Leave my daffodil leaves until at least June before getting rid of them...

I DO manage to leave them standing for about four weeks, but then I get a mad urge to cut them down with the lawn mower and make everything neat and tidy again. The bulbs really do need at least six weeks' worth of building up before ridding them of their energy making 'organs'.



## 4 Maintain the mower on a high cut until June...

THE first few months of grass cutting should be done on a high setting. Anything lower is likely to chew up wet grass and, especially if the ground is soggy, cut it too short. Very short grass early in the year only encourages invasion by moss and weeds.

## 5 Go into the garden centres with a list of plants and stick to it...

THEY do such a good job of promoting and pushing new plants that by the time I leave I have to lay down the back seat of my car to squeeze in all the extras. When I get home, I don't have enough space in which to plant them and end up moving 15 established ones in order to accommodate the new ones. And I know that in three years time I will have to change everything round again because they are planted far too close together.



## 6 Plant my spring bulbs before Christmas...

AS soon as they arrive in the shops, I rush out and buy bucket loads of bulbs. Then for some reason (and with many reasonable excuses). I manage to put off planting them until the coldest week of the year. Next year, I shall make a big effort to avoid getting frozen fingers and get them in the ground by October.

## 7 Not buy a Poinsettia plant for Christmas...

NO matter how hard I try, the plant will be faded by February, sad by March and dead by April. I shall leave it on the shop shelf next year and let someone else have a go at keeping it red and alive.



## The pick of the crop

**Q** I am planning to grow some apple trees. Could you recommend some varieties whose fruits are renowned for their good flavour?

**A** The following compatible selection will supply you with tasty apples from early autumn to late winter.

Redsleeves has medium-sized fruits flushed rosy red on a yellowish-green background. Ready from August to September, these apples are sweet, crisp and very juicy.

Worcester Pearmain is an old and reliable favourite which produces wonderful scarlet fruits in September and on into October.

Elstar is quite a weighty cropper. Its yellow fruits, flushed bright red, are ready for eating from October through to the end of January.

Fiesta offers good crops of large, red and yellow-flushed fruits from October through to March, and Kidd's Orange Red spurs and fruits very freely. Its lemon-yellow fruits, with an orange-scarlet mottle, are ready from November through to January.



## PLANT OF THE MONTH

**HAMAMELIS MOLLIS** (Witch hazel)  
**THESE** are very attractive, hardy, winter-flowering shrubs. They lose their leaves in autumn but bear spider-like, yellow, rust or red flowers in profusion from Christmas through to spring. They are found wild in North America and China and Japan. It is the Asiatic varieties (mollis and japonica) that are most popular thanks to their sweetly scented fragrant flowers.

The name is taken from the Greek 'hama' (together) and 'mela' (fruit), owing to the fruit and flowers often being found on the plant at the same time.

They need a well-drained loamy, light soil. Leaf mould incorporated into the planting hole produces good results.



Choose a sheltered position to protect and prolong the winter flowers. Propagation from seed is easy but does take time. They need three years in the soil before germinating.

Brigid Press

Read Brigid every Saturday in The Northern Echo



## New Year, new layout (or how to have a new home without moving...)

by RICHARD SPENCER

you can carry out some preliminary investigations yourself, it is wise to call in a surveyor to assess the technical requirements and ensure that the conversion will be correctly carried out with no risk to the structure.

The other way to reorganise your floor plan is to subdivide large rooms into two smaller ones. The most popular conversions of this type are carried out in order to provide an extra bedroom, or to create an en-suite bathroom within an existing room.

Whatever you want to achieve, this task is much simpler than knocking rooms together. You can generally build the necessary timber-framed partition walls in a day, although repositioning the radiators, light fittings, switches and socket outlets in the new walls may take a little longer.

Always make sure that each new room has adequate natural light and ventilation. They are not allowed to share a window and rooms that are to be lived in must have an openable window and good ventilation. You may need a new window in one of the rooms to provide this.

Kitchens, utility rooms, bathrooms and toilets do not have to have a window, but once again they must have suitable ventilation.

If a newly-partitioned room contains a fuel-burning appliance, you will need to check with the fuel supplier to check that the room has adequate ventilation. This is to make sure the appliance is able to operate efficiently and safely.

### A QUICK FIX

**Q Is it possible to repair a cracked fireback?**

**A** Cracks in an otherwise sound fireback can be filled with a fireproof cement.

**E**VERY week thousands of people welcome friends to their brand new home – even though they have not actually moved. Instead, they have re-modelled their existing property to make it suit their changing lifestyles and the needs of a growing family.

As the years pass, what was once a dream home can begin to seem a bit of a nightmare but you can bring it up to date with some clever changes.

Reorganising your home's layout sounds a daunting task, but it is actually easier than you may think. And the cost need not be prohibitive, bearing in mind that buying a new property would also hit your bank balance.

Start by taking a long cool look at the shape of your home. The interior walls play a big part in your house, but by removing some of them, you can change the layout to suit you. Building new ones can also create a different use of space.

Of course, you have to know what you are doing. Removing the wrong wall could reduce your home to a pile of rubble!

One of the easiest ways to change a room is by removing a wall between two rooms to create a dramatic feeling of space and light. It can also give a cramped floor plan better freedom of movement. Many people choose to knock the wall down between the living room and dining room. Another option is to combine the dining room and kitchen.

If you are lucky enough to have a separate porch, you could combine the living-room and entrance hall.

At the same time you may be able to block up a now-redundant doorway, freeing an additional area of wall against which you can arrange your furniture but not stopping people from being able to walk freely around the house.

The feasibility of the conversion depends on whether the wall in question is load-bearing or not. Although

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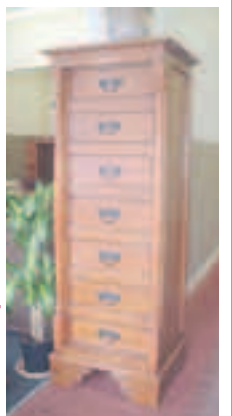
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# NE fashion

IN ASSOCIATION WITH



**Philip Burke: dresses to thrill**

Drawing his inspiration from the landscape of the North-East, fashion designer Philip Burke creates grown-up dresses for sophisticated women. He talks to CHRISTEN PEARS



# Frock on

It takes a certain kind of woman to wear Philip Burke's designs – someone with the confidence to carry off the plunging necklines, figure-skimming cuts and sheer glamour they all ooze. These are sexy, grown-up dresses, guaranteed to turn heads the minute you walk into a room and, Philip hopes, they're destined to become modern classics.

"I would like people to be able to bring one of my dresses out year after year and feel they weren't out of fashion. I want to get away from the disposable side of fashion and create something lasting and classic," he says.

Philip works from the Ministry of Design in a dilapidated-looking courtyard in Newcastle's Charlotte Square. But step across the yard and walk up the stark, wooden staircases and you find yourself in a slick, stylish office and workroom where he is already working on his new autumn/winter collections.

Philip studied at Cleveland College of Art and Design and York College of Art and Design before, before joining the degree course at Northumbria University, where he graduated in 1999. Shortly after finishing the course, he got a phone call from Hartlepool designer Scott Henshall, saying he was looking for someone to help put his collections together. It was an opportunity he couldn't turn down.

Philip worked with Scott in London for two-and-a-half years, pattern cutting and overseeing the manufacture of seven collections. He was also closely involved with the re-vamping of Mulberry – the classic British label now a favourite with the fashion-conscious. He also had a hand in making the headline-grabbing dress that model Jodie Kidd wore to the Spider-Man premiere.

His time in London provided him with a lot of insight, he says, but he had always wanted to run his own business. He moved back in with his parents in Guisborough at the beginning of 2002, working from their garage. In September last year he joined the Ministry of Design, moving with another design business.

Philip has a passion for the North-East and had always hoped to move back. He enjoys the outdoors, trout fishing and walking, and he draws a lot of inspiration for his work from the countryside.

"We're incredibly lucky here because it's such a beautiful area and I do find that inspirational. Also, because I come from the North-East, I want to do something for it. A lot of graduates leave the area but there is a wealth of talent up here."

After a year of building up the business and working mainly on bespoke clothing, he has just launched his own collection under the label Phi and is gradually building up its profile. He is uncompromising in his vision. "We are pitching it at the top end of the market," he says.

Although he is introducing a few separates, his emphasis is on dresses.

"I find that dresses are the ideal template for me to be creative. A lot of what I do is unorthodox, experimental pattern cutting and a dress gives me the freedom to be creative."

"It is quite cutting edge. People don't tend to be that creative as regards pattern cutting; they're quite traditional but I'm harking back to the old couturiers like Madeleine Vionnet who were very experimental at their time and but they also stood for quality."

The collection for Spring/Summer 2004 is an elegant and stylish. Philip favours natural fibres – cotton, linen, silks and wool – and everything is impeccably and delicately finished.

There is a very graphic palette – black and white with a few splashes of colour – and the shapes are quite traditional. Some hark back to Vionnet in the 20s and 30s and there is also a strong 1950s influence. A cream 1920s-style sequinned shift hangs on the rail next to a white dress with a striking red pattern that wouldn't have looked out of place on Marilyn Monroe.

But although the inspiration is historical, there is a modern twist. "I do look to other designers for ideas but everything is very much my own, very distinctive."

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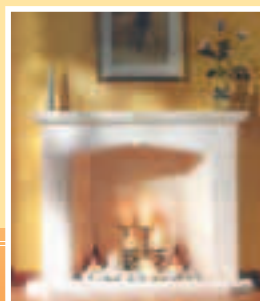


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## me and my wardrobe



**Style matters:** clockwise from top, red dress from Kate Saint, Grange Road, Darlington; Betty Jackson pink leather jacket from Joseph M, Darlington; suit by Caramelo, Fenwicks, Newcastle

Even as a teenager Lesley Keneally was interested in fashion, with a series of Saturday jobs in shops. She worked as an image consultant before opening Darlington's CACI Beauty Oasis eight years ago

**How would you describe your look?**  
Classical elegance with a twist.

**What's your favourite item of clothing?**

It's a full length, dark chocolate brown Nicole Farhi coat with a big fake fur collar that goes all the way down to the floor. I love it and I always say I'll be wearing it when they put me in my box.

**What's your worst fashion buy?**

In a previous life I was an image consultant so I haven't made a lot of bad buys for a

long time. The worst one was probably a pair of shoes I bought that I absolutely fell in love with. When I tried them on in the shop they were a bit tight but I convinced myself that my feet were swollen because it was the end of the day. I used to put them on and admire them at home but they never made it out of the house because they absolutely killed me.

**What's the most you've ever spent on an item of clothing?**

I think it was £550 on the Nicole Farhi coat but I wear it so much, it's been worth it.

**Where do you shop?**

I shop in Grange Road in Darlington. You can get almost everything you want there but I also go to Fenwick's in Newcastle.

**Which celebrity's style do you admire most and why?**

It has to be Princess Diana, particularly her eveningwear, which was so classically

elegant. She used to wear a lot of Amanda Wakeley who I adore – if I could afford it. I actually started my business after reading an article about Princess Di. She was going through her divorce but still looked fantastic, which she put down to CACI facials. She's been a big influence on me.

**CACI Beauty Oasis, Thomas Watson House, Northumberland Street, Darlington, (01325)489970.**

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## Diary of a make-up artist

ALLISON McKAY

### Time to diet and detox



**W**E are well into DEAD month now (Diet Exercise And Detox). No sooner have we pulled our chairs away from the Christmas dinner table than all the beauty mags are making us feel guilty for our over-indulgence.

A simple thing to do to incorporate DEAD into a daily routine is to drink excessive amounts of water. You get so full, you can't eat as much and it helps flush out all the toxins.

There are numerous lotions and potions out there to help us look and feel better, but they're not always affordable, especially in January. So here are a few remedies that don't cost the earth – and others that are worth spending a bit of money on.

Too much alcohol and partying until the small hours can result in a puffy face. A cheap yet effective remedy is to smear **whisked egg whites** all over, leave for ten minutes, then rinse off in cool water. This gives an instant face lift and is a treatment I often use on models on shoots.

Alternatively, a lot of the celebs swear by **NV Perricone Amine Complex Face Lift**, a snip for the elite at £98.50.

Smoky atmospheres and too many party hairdos can result in dull lifeless hair. Use up any left over **beer** as a hair rinse. It will give extra bounce and a glistening shine.

Or try **Intensive Moisture Treatment Capsules**, £4.99, by **Beverly Cobella**. These restore elasticity and shine to dry, stressed hair.

For skin that looks a bit dull, cut one papaya fruit in half, drizzle lime juice over the flesh, eat and enjoy, then smear the inside of the **papaya skin** over your face. Rinse after 10 minutes and your skin will glow – and you can be satisfied in the knowledge you have just eaten a healthy and tasty breakfast.

Or if the above doesn't appeal to you, try **Elizabeth Arden's** new **Peel and Reveal Revitalizing Treatment**, £24. The skin feels refreshed afterwards and looks visibly smoother and perkier.

Finally, one product I can't recommend strongly enough is a luxurious **Pure Silk Duvet from Mandarin Textiles**. Perfect for snuggling up in, but with the benefit of being made of 100 per cent natural silk, it is resistant to dust mites and hypoallergenic. Pure silk contains many amino acids, in common with the human body. They aren't cheap but then quality never is, but I have never slept so well. For further information contact Tim Drake on 01706 868828.

### Saving your skin

**I**n winter we spend more time in centrally heated rooms and eat less fresh food. It's little wonder our skin can feel dry and neglected. Combat this by rethinking your moisturiser. a change of texture may be just what your skin needs to feel comforted.

Alternatively, try this nurturing DIY facial treat for dry skin. Mix an egg yolk with a quarter of a teaspoon of honey and three dessertspoons of goats' yoghurt. Apply to the face and leave for 15 minutes, then rinse thoroughly.

Complementary health and beauty therapist Barbara Whale makes bespoke beauty products for her clients. CHRISTEN PEARS meets her

remedies for common ailments. Containing pure essential oils, they offer a gentle alternative to chemical-based equivalents. Although the basic ingredients for each product are the same, each one is personalised for a particular customer using essential oils.

"It's a very personal thing. You may have someone who can't stand floral oils so it's no good making something for them with flowers in. They would prefer something with citrus. There's something to suit everyone. You just have to find out what it is."

There are lotions for psoriasis and eczema, oils to relieve stress or ease aches and pains, varicose vein lotion, after sun balm and a gentle antiseptic cream.

Barbara has researched some of the old-fashioned remedies used by the Victorians and Edwardians, although she had added some of her own refinements.

"I found a recipe for mustard bath, which can help people with aches and pains or if you've got a cold because it brings out the symptoms. It was just mustard and Epsom salts, which absolutely reeks, so I've updated it with some essential oils."

Beauty products include face and body creams, bath salts and crystals, body scrub, cellulite oil and anti-stretch mark oil.

One of her most popular products is a breast developer that helps breast elasticity and can help increase cup size. It sounds too good to be true,

although Barbara says she has clients coming back for more.

"I have a friend who was getting married last year and I made up some breast developer cream just for some fun but a few months later, she came to tell me she had gone up a cup size.

"It isn't an overnight miracle. You need to have a few months of application before you see results but we know that a lot of essential oils contain female hormones – phyto hormones. They work by getting rid of toxins and firming up the muscles surrounding the breasts. It makes the breast seem larger by plumping up the cells."

But if you have Dolly Parton proportions and want to reduce your bust size, Barbara also makes a breast firming lotion, which helps reduce fatty deposits. The oils also help smooth the skin, which can sag and become crinkly with weight loss or gain and age.

The range is expanding all the time as clients ask for more and more products.

"There are a lot of synthetic ingredients and chemicals out there and a lot of people are starting to avoid them because they have no idea what they're putting into their system," says Barbara. "Plants have always been the basis of medicines – there's a plant out there for every illness."

"I want to try and get back to that, making natural products."

● For more information, call 0191-456 7227 or visit the website at [www.aromatherapy.freeuk.com](http://www.aromatherapy.freeuk.com)

Barbara Whale: takes the guesswork out of choosing beauty and skincare products

# The woman who makes everything up

**H**OW many times have you stood in the chemist's bewildered by the vast array of products on the shelves? Is your skin dry, oily or combination? Do you need a cream cleanser or a bar? Should you opt for fragranced, fragrance free or organic?

Barbara Whale takes the guesswork out of choosing beauty and skincare products by creating bespoke mixtures for her clients. She has been making her own products for just over two years, although she set up her own business, Barbara Complementary Health and Beauty Studio, in 1991.

She had trained with cosmetics company Helena Rubinstein but grew dissatisfied and decided to go into business on her own, working from a terraced house in South Shields. The atmosphere in the treatment room is homely and rather old-fashioned, with green frilled curtains and a flowery sofa. But she offers the latest range of treatments, including reflexology, shiatsu, aromatherapy and stone therapy.

She started making her own products when customers began to make requests. "Someone would have a massage and say they liked the smell of something and would love it in a hand cream or a foot cream. In the end, I had a list of things and decided to try making them," she says.

She manufactures everything herself, using no synthetic ingredients or preservatives and there are jars and tubs, all carefully labelled by hand, covering the table and shelves in the room.

The range is vast and includes skin, hair and body products, as well as



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## NE motoring

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The Chrysler Crossfire – deserves to succeed

## A sound investment

**B**IG, square and sticking out of the back of the car, the twin exhausts threaten their true purpose even before the new Crossfire bursts into life. The technical phrase “silencer” is a bit of a misnomer in this instance; as the rev counter needle passes the three grand mark, the exhausts become acoustic chambers, not noise inhibitors, for the glorious cacophony that emits from the coupe’s motor.

It howls, it hollers, it sings a magnificent melodious tenor song, to the delight of the enthusiast at its wheel, if not the world at large. If there is no other reason to buy a Chrysler Crossfire, buy it because it simply sounds superb.

The jury may be out on its weird and wacky American looks, its plain and functional interior, its middle of the road badging, but the echo of its exhaust note reverberates around the soul long after handing back the key.

Crossfire represents an affordable foray into the ultra competitive coupe market. At about £27,000, it is keenly priced, but it is up against opposition which has spent years carving out the right image.

The Chrysler must rest its fortunes on unique looks, high specification and an engaging driving experience, which indeed, it does.

There is certainly nothing on the road that quite looks like a Crossfire so if drivers are after something different then the coupe scores highly. The front is very American, the bonnet long and aggressive, the rear distinctly boat like. It is no shrinking violet and the buying public with either love or loath it. I like the way it looks. There is also a nifty spoiler that pops out the back automatically when the car reaches 60mph, which is nothing but cool.

The rear wheels are 19in, an inch larger than the front, both sets sporting fat rubber and giving the Crossfire dragster appeal. Jacked-up rear, low-slung front give it the tipped forward appearance of something that has strayed from the drag-strip.

Inside is more Mercedes than it is Chrysler with some of the quality fixtures and fittings crossing the Daimler/Chrysler divide. The dash, switches and stalks are

straight from the German marque bringing a welcome luxury air to a cabin which is otherwise pretty unremarkable. It’s not bad, it does nothing wrong, it just doesn’t quite live up to the radical exterior.

That said, the specification is high with superb leather sports seats which adjust eight ways, – electrically, of course. There’s air-conditioning, a mega hi-fi system, electric windows and mirrors.

So, to the driving experience. Well, with a 3.2 litre V6 motor sounding that good, Chrysler must surely be on to a winner. The 215bhp unit provides electric performance – 0-62mph in 6.5 seconds, 155mph top speed – while still returning almost 30mpg. There is a broad range of usable power from well below 3,000rpm which makes it a lazy car to drive if you are not in the mood. If you are in the mood, there is more than enough performance to meet any demands.

Both the six speed manual and the sequential automatic gearboxes are excellent. The manual has a lovely action, the auto seamless changes and sensitive kickdown. The manual gives the driver slightly more control and makes the car sound better. But either would be easy to live with.

The other trump card is the Crossfire’s handling, which is absolutely fantastic, even on the horribly slippery winter roads of North Yorkshire. Grip is awesome, ride astounding and body control breathtaking. It really is a joy to drive around the bends. The steering does feel a bit dead at first but is immensely stable and diverted from its track by nothing. It’s uncanny.

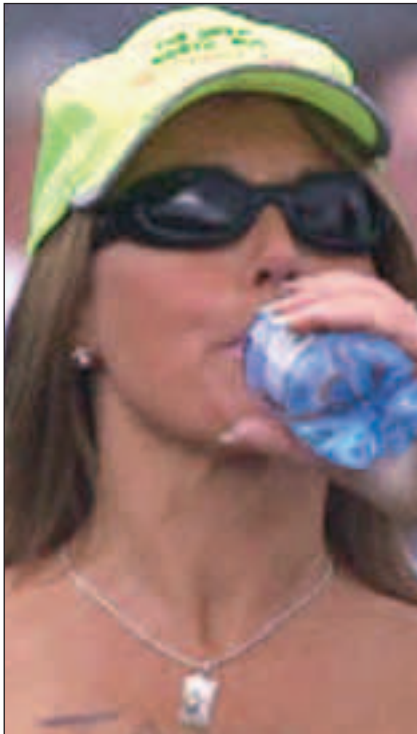
Crossfire deserves to succeed. It is accomplished, brave and credible, with one of the best-sounding exhaust notes on the road today. If that’s not something to sing about, then I don’t know what is.

*The echo of its exhaust note reverberates around the soul long after handing back the key*



# 10 ways to get your body into gear

Lifestyle and fitness consultants TRACY and PHIL CORDELL offer some top tips for getting the most out of your body in the year ahead



**6** Avoid excess tea, coffee, alcohol. To maintain your hydration levels, you will need to add one measure of water to your normal two-plus litres per day, for every measure of tea, coffee or alcohol.

**7** Sleep in as dark a room as possible. A light room, or 'light on' in your room, will encourage your body to think it is still daytime, and you will lose the repair/recovery benefits of sleep. No TVs, mobile phones, or LED displays should be in your bedroom.

**8** Keep foods simple. Once again, processed, pre-cooked, frozen or fortified etc. will be lower in nutritional value than wholefoods.

**9** Avoid all processed foods. Can we say this often enough!



**10** Know your metabolic type. Only when you know your metabolic type can you know how to manage your

health. Supplements should complement your metabolic type. Use of supplements is just guesswork unless you know your metabolic type.

Tracy and Phil can be contacted at:  
e-mail: [pfitforyou@aol.com](mailto:pfitforyou@aol.com)  
website : [www.fitforyou.co.uk](http://www.fitforyou.co.uk)  
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Weights are great for fat loss

## LIFE COACH

### 2004: DIVING INTO LIFE

**WHAT could you do differently to live your life to the full in 2004? What are your dreams? What fears might be holding you back?**

With each New Year many of us take time to reflect on what we want the year to bring for us. The changes we want to make, the renewed promises for a healthier lifestyle, different career or simply more fun. Gym membership, new diets... all will be in vain unless we truly value ourselves enough to believe we

deserve the very best in life.

Fears that we might not be good enough or deserve to have it all can hold us back from getting what we really want. Don't allow your fears to rule your life this year. Believe in yourself and your dreams and dive into a truly wonderful 2004.

Juliette Lee



Juliette is available at [www.sunflowercoaching.com](http://www.sunflowercoaching.com) or on 0774 0416891

**Q** I exercise all the time at the gym. I run, I use the rowing machine and the stepper. But I can't seem to lose weight.

**A** This is a very common problem. As you get into an aerobic routine, you burn calories at a lower rate. This is due to the body, heart and lungs, adapting to the exercise given. The calories are burned, or metabolism is raised, only when you are exercising (with a little overlap of two to four hours). If you were to increase your lean tissue, you would burn more calories, even in your sleep: 1lb of fat burns approximately two calories per day; 1lb of muscle burns a minimum of 35 calories per day. As a protective response, the body also releases a chemical that inhibits muscle growth if it is required to do endurance exercise (otherwise marathon runners would have larger legs than rugby players).

**Q** How can I get rid of my tummy after having a baby?

**A** Nutrition and correct exercise are the only ways to do this. There is no excuse that having a baby will leave you with a poor lower stomach, even after a caesarean, or subsequent births. At Fit for You we use a proven method to flatten and tone your midsection

**Q** I get so confused by what foods to eat.

**A** Metabolic typing identifies which are the correct foods for you, and in which ratio. What may be right for you, may not be right for someone else.

**Q** Is the Atkins diet, so beloved of celebrities, safe?

**A** In short, no. But Dr Atkins had a good argument to the common Food Pyramid Diet, and has proved to people that fat in your diet does not necessarily make you fat. But cutting out any one food group, in this case carbohydrates, for any period of time, is not healthy. By adhering to this type of diet, you could be so far away from what you should really be consuming that you could be risking your long-term health.

**Q** I heard that eggs are bad for you as they are high in cholesterol?

**A** A common myth. Eggs are a whole food, and although they contain cholesterol, when the body is regularly receiving cholesterol from food, it will absorb less. 80 per cent of the blood cholesterol is manufactured by the body, 20 per cent is absorbed from cholesterol in food. We must understand that high cholesterol in the blood is a result of high insulin release (insulin is released into the bloodstream as a protection when too much glucose is present, and glucose is present when carbohydrates are consumed and are converted to glucose). As you eat eggs regularly, less cholesterol is absorbed.

**Q** Are diet drinks better for you than ordinary carbonated drinks?

**A** Both are bad for you. Diet drinks would be classed as less healthy as they contain sweeteners such as aspartame, which has been linked with various illnesses such as headaches, numbness, fatigue, blurred vision, heart palpitations, memory loss, dizziness, muscle spasms, weight gain, seizures, rashes, blindness, tachycardia, tinnitus, joint pain, nausea, depression, hearing loss, irritability, slurred speech, anxiety attacks, loss of taste, vertigo and insomnia. Flavoured drinks in any way are damaging to health, and should be kept to a minimum.

**1** Drink at least 2 litres of pure or mineral water every day. Most people are dehydrated, leading to skin, digestion, attention, muscular and joint disorders, to name a few. The body is 76 per cent water, the brain is 80 per cent water, we need to keep it topped up.

**2** Avoid processed grains – white bread, pasta, rice. Every time a food goes through a process, it loses its nutritional value, and becomes less of a food.

**3** Exercise or perform some physical activity for 30 minutes every day. Organise some formal activity, pushing your own comfort zone, in addition to normal activity.

**4** Weight train for fat loss. Increase your metabolism by increasing lean tissue. Relying on cardio/aerobic exercise for weight management is rarely successful unless you are a competitive endurance athlete.

**5** Avoid all sugary foods. Every time you put sugar (or anything that turns to sugar, such as carbohydrate) in your mouth, you will stop burning body fat.



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## gadget man



● Don't miss  
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Gadget lovers look forward to a New Year with great expectation. NIGEL BURTON picks ten gadgets for 2004...



**1 Blu-Ray:** How many of you bought a DVD recorder for Christmas? Maybe you should have waited because another technology is about to break that makes DVD recordings look like a 15-year-old VHS tape that's been kept in a bag of magnets. It uses a different wave length laser to record far more information to a DVD-style disc. The result is high definition pictures so good they out perform all current UK televisions.

**2 Digital SLRs:** Until now the true digital SLR camera has been the preserve of professionals. Canon started the trend for cheaper SLRs before Christmas with the 300D. Now Nikon and Pentax are poised to join the party.

**3 E-Pilot Remote Control:** The E-pilot remote control sold in its thousands in 2003 - 7,800 were snapped up at Maplins stores alone - making it one of the most popular gadgets of the year. For a nation of TV addicts, hardly surprising! The E-pilot remote will control up to eight electrical appliances, from Sky box to Hi Fi to video. Never leave your sofa again...

**4 Widescreen Mini TVs:** With a 7ins screen, these little critters bring a new

meaning to the idea of the portable TV! They can be powered from a car lighter socket using the supplied lead, from the mains or by batteries, ideal for soap addicts.

**5 Wire-less PC equipment:** No cables to get tangled at the back of your PC, no limited reach with your mouse, wire-less gadgets are perfect for the PC installation that's a bit crowded.

**6 PDAs:** Last year was a good one for the Pocket PC operating system. We can expect more of the same in 2004 - more memory (128 MB), faster processing speeds (400 Mhz+) and better battery life. This may be the year when mobile phones and PDAs finally merge into one useful device.

**7 MP3 data stores:** The Apple iPod was one of the best loved gadgets of 2003. For this year Apple plans to increase its market share by selling a cheaper version for less than £100. Archos will fight back with portable hard drives capable of storing video, DVD movies and photos. Prices are nearly £500 but they will come down over the next 18 months.

**8 In Car MP3:** Continuing the music theme, is the In Car MP3-CD player. With a huge capacity for playing all your favourite tunes (ten albums per disc), these units are a must for drivers with a passion for music.

**9 Radio controlled cars:** The Italian Job got a remake for a 2003 audience and the Mini revival was complete. The Remote Control Mini remains a favourite for kids and big kids alike and now you can kit out your r/c garage with a Subaru Impreza and a Ford Focus too.

**10 Mini fridge:** If we have another summer like 2003 this could be just the job. It's a portable chiller, which also plugs into the cigarette lighter in a car for ice-cold soft drinks in transit.

## Brides INTERNATIONAL

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## EATING OUT

### NEW INN, THRINTOFT



**T**UCKED away in the peaceful village of Thrintoft, near Northallerton, is a little-known treasure. The New Inn may look like a quaint local country pub, but its food is comparable to any restaurant in the area.

With its friendly informal atmosphere, it's a perfect place to stop for a relaxing drink and a quick bite, as well as a special occasion dinner. With a bar area and a restaurant, you can choose where you dine and set the tone for your meal.

Our special occasion was our three-year-old son Jack having a sleepover at Granny's near York. A night on our own called for some top quality food and drink, within staggering distance of home.

The New Inn is run by Mel Fletcher and her partner Luca Gallucci, who met while working as chefs on cruise ships. They have been at the pub and restaurant for nearly 18 months and have introduced some Italian cuisine to both the everyday menu and the specials board.

All their meat is bought locally and beer lovers are offered a selection of real ale, including Websters, Black Sheep and John Smiths. There is also an extensive wine list.

#### Starters

The starter menu includes Scottish smoked salmon with dill, crème fraîche and warm toast, southern-fried potato wedges with a tangy barbecue sauce, and a creamy potato and Brie gratinee. Starters cost between £3.50 and £4.50 and portions are large.

#### Main courses

The menu has options to cater for every palate, with a wide range of meat, fish and vegetarian dishes.

Traditional main courses include steak and ale pie, scampi, and fresh Whitby cod, while vegetarians would enjoy the New Inn penne pasta, which is simmered with Italian pancetta in a creamy tomato sauce. Other vegetarian options include a spinach and ricotta canelloni and a vegetable lasagne.

The specials board included a Red Snapper Pescatore and a 12oz steak, and prices range from £5.95 to £13.50.

I chose pork fillet medallions flamed in a brandy sauce with Dijon mustard, and it was delicious. Ian went for the 10oz fillet steak, also cooked in a Dijon mustard sauce, which he described as perfect.

#### Pudding

Ian refused a dessert but chose an Irish coffee at £2.95 while I tried the Italian option, the Tartufo Nero, which was exquisite.

#### Conclusion

The New Inn is definitely worth a visit. The food is delicious and extremely good value. Our waitress Holly was very friendly and able to answer all our queries about the menu.

The pub was also child-friendly and willing to provide child-sized portions of main courses. It also has a large car park and pub games.

The bill for two people for two starters, two main courses, a pudding and a liqueur coffee came to £50.50 and included a bottle of Errazuriz, a Chilean chardonnay, which was £13.50.

Ruth Campbell

**The New Inn, Thrintoft, Northallerton, North Yorkshire, DL7 0PN; tel 01609 777060.**



**Sara Eastgate:** shopper, potato peeler, cook, barlady, cleaner, local counsellor and bottle-washer all rolled into one

## My first pub

**B**OLDRON, a wind-worn village on a hill just south of Barnard Castle, has perhaps 50 homes, a humble Anglican church, a village hall, and a tiny post office, where former landlady Ruby Johnson now dispenses stamps instead of beer.

Until her retirement, Ruby ran the pub for 20 years; now the woman who's taken her place behind the bar has just finished her first.

Sara Eastgate has been in catering before, in London in her mid-20s, before she went to New Zealand to work for Telecom New Zealand. When her marriage broke up, Sara decided it was time to come home. She took refuge at her parents' home near Bedale in North Yorkshire and went to work for the finance department at Orange in Darlington.

Sara had been looking for a change of career but the pub trade hadn't really figured until a pub came up in the village of Hackworth. "I went to have a look and got all enthusiastic but my offer wasn't accepted. It made me realise, though, that I wanted to get back into catering, not in a hotel or restaurant, but running my own pub. I'd never thought about it before."

The pub in Boldron was just one of the sets of details that came through from the estate agents when Sara expressed an interest. The landlady wanted to retire, taking the Post Office

We all like a visit to a cosy country pub for a pint and a meal, but what's it like being at the other side of the bar?

with her, to a cottage at the other end of the village. Sara bought the pub, and soon made her presence known. It was redecorated from top to toe – shiny, deep red walls; crisp, white tablecloths in the restaurant; traditional hops round the bar and blue and white china on the fireplace and mantels. Furniture was largely what Sara had brought with her and couldn't fit into the small living quarters of the pub.

Next, she set about revamping the food. The George and Dragon had been run very much on basic, village lines – crisps and nuts for Monday night's quois players, beer and a chat for the farmers, and the odd sandwich on special occasions. "I wanted people to come and eat here, to attract a new clientele," says Sara.

Her menu is eclectic, quite rich, and aimed at people who like something special when they go out, the sort of food they'd never get round to cooking at home. There's terrine of pheasant foie gras and truffles; pan-fried Gressingham duck with plum sauce; minted lamb steak; salmon steak and cous-cous crust; home-made lemon

meringue ice-cream. Fresh, local ingredients are the order of the day. Those who have eaten at the George and Dragon tend to come back again, says Sara, but getting the word around isn't easy. Cooking is one thing; PR another.

"We are out of the way, not on a main road to anywhere and that makes it more difficult," says Sara. "I'm thinking of putting a lunchtime bar menu together to help attract more families up here."

As for the day-to-day running of her first pub, Sara has found it very hard work, the seven-day week compounded by the fact that she is often shopper, potato peeler, cook, barlady, cleaner, local counsellor and bottle-washer all rolled into one.

Before Sara could enter the licensed trade she had to enrol on a course which taught the basic legal requirements and another which taught the basics of beer-keeping. "I would like to have real ales in future, but it's an expensive move and you need to have a pretty swift turnover," says Sara.

Sara has just finished her first year as a publican and feels she's learned a lot, though at no small cost to a social life outside the pub. "It is incredibly hard work," says Sara. "A surprising number of things have to be done every day before that bolt snaps back at opening time. It's fairly all-consuming."

● **The George and Dragon Inn, Boldron, nr Barnard Castle (01833 638215)**

## 'It's a vocation, not a nine-to-five job'

**T**HE Ship Inn may be Graham and Liz Snaith's first pub but since taking over three years ago, they have won a string of awards.

"We have been very lucky. I was in engineering when we decided we needed a change. We wanted a house with an income. We used to throw good parties and we thought we might be able to run a pub," says Graham.

The couple looked at several pubs before settling on The Ship in Middlestone Village, near Bishop Auckland.

They bought it from Vaux brewery, which had closed it as unviable, and transformed it into an award-winning

venue with a reputation for excellent ale and food.

They have offered more than 400 real ales, mainly from small independent breweries across the country, as well as introducing a twice-yearly beer festival.

The couple have won the Campaign for Real Ale's regional Pub of the Year title and were pipped to the national title in January last year.

Graham says: "We had never run a pub before so it's been a case of building things up gradually and a lot of teamwork."

"I think the key is that we enjoy doing it. It's as simple as that. It's a vocation, not a nine-to-five job."





Christine Fieldhouse on holiday with son Jack



We often return from holiday wishing we'd taken more exercise than that walk to the bar – but how about using your annual holiday to get fit? CHRISTINE FIELDHOUSE spends an all-inclusive fortnight at Lakitira on the Greek island of Kos with her husband Ian and three-year-old son Jack to see if her two weeks away would make her fitter or merely fatter?



Task-master: personal fitness trainer Doug Hutchison with wife Melanie, who runs step and aerobics classes

# Will you be fit for your hols this year?

**G**ETTING fit on holiday? What a contradiction. I see holidays as a chance to eat and drink whatever I like, swim whenever the mood takes me and go for leisurely walks when I'm not lying by the swimming pool, reading and sleeping. But I accepted the challenge to up the tempo with the firm belief that if I could do it, anyone could.

I turned to Darlington fitness trainer Doug Hutchison to draw up a fitness schedule, but first Doug needed to know what my present fitness routine was. In an average week I did 90 minutes at a yoga class and some weeks I managed an hour in the gym and a long weekend walk. I also kept active chasing round after our three-year-old Jack.

We started with a pre-holiday fitness test – three minutes stepping. I'm 5ft 2ins tall and weighed in at 8st 4lbs and my resting heart rate was 68 beats per minute. My blood pressure was 110 over 68 and my lung capacity was 430 litres.

After the step test, my resting heart rate was up to 115 beats per minute. My body fat, measured from my underarm, shoulders and tummy – was 35.5 per cent, slightly higher than average so while I wasn't interested in losing weight, I was keen to reduce the fat.

Then it was time for some rules. Doug wanted me to have a holiday and not ruin it in pursuit of fitness. He pointed out that although I seemed relatively fit, I was exercising comfortably and not pushing myself. It seemed running was the key.

Doug's exercise rules were as follows:

- 1** Exercising in high temperatures promotes fluid loss so you must continually replace lost fluid.
- 2** When you sweat, salts are lost and this can cause muscle cramps – a pinch of salt with meals a few days before the holiday may help.

- 3** Wear light-coloured or white loose-fitting clothing, and a hat.
- 4** Try exercising in the morning or evening when it is cooler.
- 5** Warm up gradually and stretch once you are warmed. Keep correct posture, stomach in, shoulders back, chin up and stand tall.
- 6** Aim to exercise aerobically each day increasing from 20 minutes to 60 minutes. On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is your normal resting pulse rate, aim to work around the 5/6 mark.
- 7** Walking and jogging will produce the best results. Establish a course and note any landmarks you pass such as trees, cafes, signposts. Jog until you are slightly uncomfortable, then walk briskly, until you can jog again. Increase the jogging distance each time.
- 8** On alternate days do aerobics classes, or swim (one length moderate intensity, one length hard) for 40 minutes, play tennis, hire a bike or play on the beach.
- 9** Remember walking on the beach and in the sea is harder than walking on the road.
- 10** Do pelvic tilts and sit-ups while lying on the beach or by the pool.

I'VE never been great at running and in the past one short run has left me unable to walk for days and I've given up on it, but I was determined to try Doug's method of building up distance.

For my first run I'd ear-marked a nearby hotel, about 300 yards from our resort of Lakitira, but I couldn't even run all the way there. I had to jog, then walk, and returned very red in the face and despondent. I wasn't sure if I was tired from the journey to Kos, if the heat was too much or if I was just very unfit.

But I gradually built up the distance I ran. Using Doug's tips of establishing significant landmarks helped and I earmarked a go-kart track, a lamp-post

with a poster on and a hotel as my goals. By building up distance I never suffered from the aching joints I'd had after running in the past.

After a week I was up to a 30-minute run without stopping and I had also got acclimatised to the heat.

From then on, there was a marked improvement every day. I'd originally wanted to run three miles without stopping, but I decided to double this for my goal – and run to the nearest town Kardamena and back.

On our final day, when I ran six miles in an hour, it felt like a major achievement.

As well as running, I did a lot of walking, mainly into Kardamena, at a moderate pace in high daytime temperatures. Cooling off in the pool for half an hour was less arduous but I didn't make it to any of the aerobics classes. I've found it's true that you should find an exercise you enjoy and those classes didn't appeal at all.

I did about six lots of sit-ups in our room, but after all the walking, running and swimming, I just wanted to flop on the beach.

As far as diet went, I ate more than at home. Breakfast was cereal with milk, lunch was often a pasta dish or fish and vegetables and dinner was three courses. A typical evening meal was stuffed vine leaves and aubergines as a starter, moussaka, stuffed tomatoes and oven-cooked potatoes as a main course and I had a dessert every other night – despite a choice of six every evening.

I had only two alcohol-free days, but I resisted the creamy cocktails I love so much and I tried not to eat between meals.

## POST-HOLIDAY FITNESS TEST

MY measurements didn't change dramatically. The most noticeable one was an inch and a half lost from my waist, but health-wise I seem to have made improvements.

I lost a pound in weight, my resting heart rate was down to 60 beats per minute and my blood pressure to 108 over 65. My heart rate after exercise had dropped by 17 beats per minute to 98 and my lung capacity increased to 450 litres over minutes. My body fat was down one per cent to 34.5 per cent but I felt more energised and healthier.

So what was Doug's verdict when I returned for the three-minute step test, the body fat test and the weight-in?

"With the aerobic training Christine's heart and lungs have already become stronger. Her resting heart rate, blood pressure and peak flow readings (lung capacity) had all improved.

"Weight wasn't an issue in this case but losing a pound while on an all-inclusive holiday is remarkable. She reduced her hip and waist size, which we can put down to toning and a little fat loss.

"The distance she jogged on her final session was very impressive. It's clear that although Christine enjoyed walking and yoga before her holiday, she needed to move the goalposts and push herself a little more aerobically.

"I would now recommend she continues to exercise three or four times a week, working hard most sessions, and she will continue to feel energised, fit and healthy."

**DOUG Hutchison is a personal fitness trainer who specialises in weight management and nutrition and his wife Melanie runs a series of step and aerobics classes. They are based in Darlington, County Durham, and can be reached on 01325 258399.**

Christine and her family stayed at the Mark Warner resort at Lakitira, Kos. Prices start at £490 for an adult for a week and include flights, transfers, accommodation, all meals with wine, childcare for children over two and some sports. 0870 770 4222,





Sun seeker: the Braemar berthed in the Mediterranean

# Endless summer

ANTHONY NICHOLAS cruises off to a series of hotspots guaranteed to warm the hearts of even the most jaded traveller

IT'S close to midnight in the Mediterranean, and the evening air is as warm as toast. A cool breeze ruffles my hair as I stand on the terraces at the back of the Braemar, surveying the unique spectacle of two continents at the same time.

Stage left, Africa is an undulating ribbon of lights, sharp against the dark sky. Stage right, a scant eight miles away, Europe casts a seductive, glittery sheen on the sea as we surge through the Straits of Gibraltar. Just inside the door, the first bars of Baby Love float out across the night air. Above my head, a string of coloured lights sways along as if in tempo. Behind me, our wake cuts a furrowed, frothy path all the way back to Barcelona. Stars in the sky shimmer like diamonds on the scene, gallery spectators to the theatre acted out so far below.

This was just one of the highlights of our 14-night odyssey to the sun. Boarding Braemar in Dover on a balmy Wednesday, we neatly sidestepped hellish airport crowds and flight delays. Instead, we switched jet lag for the comfort of a bubbling Jacuzzi as the Braemar set out for the Mediterranean.

Two full days on a flat calm sea allowed us to prepare for what lay ahead. Passengers took advantage of the soaring temperatures to indulge in some serious relaxation.

The pool and Jacuzzis were never more popular than just before the alfresco lunchtime buffets, complete with ice cream delivered to people in the hot tubs. People sprawled on sun beds tapped their feet to the lunchtime music on deck, or took one of the shaded tables that sprinkled the quieter terraces at the rear. By day three, when the Braemar sailed up the sun dappled Tagus into the

historical glut that is Lisbon, the mood was totally laid back.

A healthy dollop of old fashioned awe now topped the bill. Lisbon, home of Henry the Navigator, is possibly the most beautiful, underrated capital in Western Europe. The approach, up past the minuscule pepper pot Belem Tower, the soaring monument to Prince Henry and the sublime span of the April 25th bridge, is one of the most spectacular in the world. Sprawled along the ancient harbour, Lisbon retains much of its historic character in the Alfama, a warren of hilly streets that hold their own surprises. The smell of fresh brewed coffee here, the melancholy wailings of fado there. On the waterfront, superb fish restaurants are sprawled along the sun-splashed quayside.

By nightfall, Braemar was under way again, heading for an overnight stay in Barcelona. The Catalan capital – they don't consider themselves as Spanish in Barca – is worth a weekend of anybody's life.

FROM the vast, tree-lined sprawl of the central Ramblas, with street theatre, tapas bars and shops, to the soaring, honey-coloured dream that is Gaudi's great, still unfinished Sagrada Familia, Barcelona has it all. The entire city, mutilated by Franco and then gloriously renovated for the '92 Olympics, is one long boisterous, swaggering spread.

Whether you are religious or not, Sagrada Familia cannot fail to awe. When asked about the endless construction schedule, Gaudi simply pointed to the sky, and said that his client was in no real hurry. His quirky, eclectic series of buildings forms a series of random exclamation marks in this bustling seaport, dominated by the looming bulk of Montjuich on the right. In the renovated Port Olympic, nightlife goes on until the early morning hours. At five in the morning, Barcelona sweltered in 29 degrees of heat.

It would get hotter still. When Braemar anchored in the jaw dropping bay of Villefranche, on the French Riviera, we were at a steady



Work in progress: Gaudi's great cathedral, the Sagrada Familia

45 degrees. This beautiful resort was used as the setting for one of the Bond films – Octopussy – and it isn't hard to see why.

On the waterfront, a string of pastel-shaded Italianate buildings curves around the bay. While many opted for money magnets like nearby Nice, Monte Carlo or chic, breezy Cannes, the heat made the idea of a shady lunch in Villefranche seem like a good choice.

And so it went. Propriano is a beautiful little one-horse town of a resort, set along the gorgeous, pine-clad shoreline of Corsica. Only on so relatively small a ship could you visit this little gem. La Corunna, up in Northern Spain, was an elegant counterpoint to its boisterous Catalan cousin.

By the time we returned to Dover, the Bond theme was still in evidence. Shaken we were not, stirred we surely were.

● **A 14-night Mediterranean cruise costs from £1,895 per person to £4,935 per person in superior suite with balcony. There is a 30 per cent Early Booking Discount when booked six months or more ahead of departure. For inquiries and reservations contact Fred Olsen Cruise Lines on (01473) 742424, visit the website on [www.fredolsencruises.co.uk](http://www.fredolsencruises.co.uk) or visit your local ABTA travel agent.**

UNTIL March 31, Middlethorpe Hall, York, is once again offering popular Spa Breaks. These breaks are for one or more consecutive nights – Sunday to Thursday (weekends subject to availability), and include accommodation, early morning tea, cooked breakfast, three course dinner, a half bottle of champagne per person in the room on arrival and full use of the Middlethorpe Spa. There's also a pool and gym. You also get three beauty treatments on your first day.

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Behind me,  
our wake cuts  
a furrowed, frothy  
path all the way  
back to Barcelona



# NE puzzles

Find a word that can follow the word on the left and precede the word on the right. When you have filled in all the answers, the name of a celebrity can be read from top to bottom in one of the lines.

UNION					RABBIT
DAWN					LINE
CHANNEL					VISION
SPECIAL					LINE
HOT					SALAD
PLAY					MASTER
GRAND					PLAYER
TOP					SPLIT
ROSE					PEAS
PARADE					RENT
SCAR					PAPER
WATER					GRIP

## WORD wise

The word may sound familiar, but do you know what it means?

### MYOPIC

- A** Long-sighted  
**B** Short-sighted  
**C** Colour blind

### ANSWER

*B: Short-sighted*

## CELEBRITY STARES



Name the star pictured on the left

**Celebrity wordmatch:** The missing words are: jack, chorus, tunnel, branch, potato, school, piano, banana, garden, ground, tissue, pistol and the celebrity is Jonathan Ross

**Celebrity stare:** Justin Timberlake

### ANSWERS

## IMPOSSIBLE PUZZLE

There is an odd connection between the ages of three sisters. The square of the age of the middle one is 120 less than the square of the age of the eldest, but 120 more than the square of the age of the youngest.

What were those ages?

### SOLUTION

*Ages 7, 13, and 17 years.*

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Crathorne Hall has been awarded the coveted RAC Blue Ribbon award for the sixth consecutive year and named one of the top 200 AA hotels in the UK with four red stars. The hotel has recently joined the prestigious Hand Picked Hotels group, a collection of 14 country house hotels throughout the UK and Channel Islands.

Prices for a one night dinner, bed and breakfast stay at Crathorne Hall start from £100 per person per night.

To stand a chance of winning an overnight stay for two at Crathorne Hall simply send your name and address to Crathorne Hall, NE Magazine Competition, Hand Picked Hotels, Marketing

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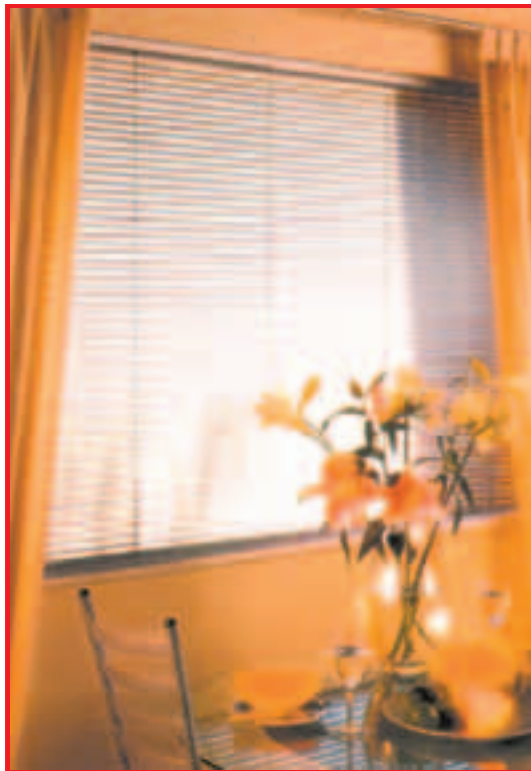
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