

The Northern Echo

# ne

The lifestyle magazine  
for the North-East

MAY 2005

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razzle dazzle

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from EAST

**INTERIORS**  
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# nE

## contents



<b>nE</b> magazine is produced by <b>The Northern Echo/</b> Newsquest Ltd., a Gannett Company, Priestgate, Darlington DL1 1NF (01325) 381313	<b>3</b> <b>SHARON GRIFFITHS</b> Anyone for coffee?	<b>17</b> <b>LIFE COACH</b> Always look on the bright side
<b>4</b> <b>INTERIORS</b> What's cooking in the kitchen	<b>6</b> <b>INTERIORS</b> A five-star holiday cottage	<b>18</b> <b>GADGET MAN</b> Beating speed cameras on the cheap
<b>10</b> <b>GARDENING</b> Greens galore and copious courgettes	<b>12</b> <b>FASHION</b> <b>WIN</b> Penelope Cruz's necklace	<b>19</b> <b>FASHION</b> Bridal dresses to die for
<b>14</b> <b>ME AND MY WARDROBE</b> Ginny Dick	<b>15</b> <b>McCOURT &amp; MCKAY</b> Out on the town	<b>19</b> <b>COMPETITION</b> <b>WIN</b> clothing vouchers from EAST
<b>16</b> <b>SHOPPING</b> Into the Team Valley		<b>20</b> <b>MOTURING</b> Mitsubishi's cute little workhorse
		<b>21</b> <b>NE CONNECTIONS</b> Are you well insured?



Front cover:  
dress by EAST

IN ASSOCIATION WITH





## sharon griffiths

“If I had a coffee maker like that, it could change my life

**A** SHARP knife, a fork, a wooden spoon, some pots and pans – apparently they are the only equipment a good cook needs – though I bet it wasn't a good cook who said it. Everything else is, apparently, a luxury.

Which could, of course, explain all the gadgets and gizmos that are gathering dust in kitchen cupboards throughout the country.

Apparently there are £431 million worth of bread makers lurking unused and unloved under thousands of sinks, £377 million worth of sandwich toasters and £109 million of electric knives. And an awful lot of fondue sets.

I plead guilty to the sandwich toaster. We had an ancient one which the boys used a lot, so much that I bought a super whizzy, easy clean, high tech job, that was impossible to put back together after you washed it. So it sits in bits in a carrier bag on the shelf below the potatoes. Neglected and unloved.

I have a bread maker, but I actually use it. Not every day but at least two or three times a week. I love it. And a blender and a juicer. But otherwise, I've generally avoided gadgets. I can inflict enough damage on a joint of beef with an ordinary carving knife – I don't need to be plugged into the mains.

With one exception.

All my adult life I have been on quest for the perfect coffee maker. These days I drink very little coffee, but when I do, I want it good and strong and hot.

When I was a child supermarkets didn't sell real coffee. You'd have to get it from the grocer who would grind it freshly for every customer and you would walk home with the tantalising smell. Once you got the coffee home, the rest was easy. My mother just made it in a jug which she left on the Aga. It stayed warm, the grounds settled, the coffee tasted good. No problems.

But when I left home and tried the same technique, it wasn't the same in a flat with a tiny Baby Belling – coffee full of grounds and disgustingly tepid.

My sister sent me from Germany a little tin filter and a red tin coffee pot. This was great – when I could find the filter papers to fit it – but it only made enough for two small cups at a time. Not very satisfying, or sociable.

I tried a percolator. Remember percolators? They used to bubble away enticingly, and smelt very promising. But the coffee was disgusting, black and bitter with all the flavour

bubbled out. Thankfully I went away for a weekend and left the percolator on. So when I came back there was a smell of burning, a tiny spoonful of black coffee sludge and one dead percolator.

I went back to using the little tin filter.

Then as a wedding present we received one of those drip-feed coffee makers. Quite nice coffee – but it took an age.

A millionaire friend once gave us – along with a wagon load of firewood – a fancy Italian espresso machine. That was a mixed success. Occasionally we had wonderful, delicious hot coffee. Then at other times we had mud, or even cold mud and I never could work out what I or the machine was doing wrong that made such a difference. But then a vital bit broke and couldn't be replaced, so I stuck the posh machine in the cupboard under the stairs and went back to the little tin filter.

Then – hooray! – a friend who ran a pub went to a catering exhibition and came back with a filter jug. At last, we had coffee that was easy to make, ready fairly quickly, from a machine that produced at least two mugs of coffee from one pot and kept it tolerably warm. True, the jugs were made of glass and so were breakable. But they were soon widely available so that was all right. Sometimes the filter bits went wonky too – so being of a frugal nature, I had a cupboard full of spare parts. Our current filter jug is a triumph of transplant surgery and is the remains of three different jugs. It means I have to be careful when I push the filter down or everyone round the table gets a coffee fountain, but it's a small price to pay.

But after ten years or so of happy filter coffee, I am in danger of being seduced again...

I keep seeing ads for coffee makers. They talk about steel body solenoid valves, 15 bar pressure, removable water tank, heavy duty brass, chrome plated, traditional frothers...

Seductive or what?

As I read the ads, study the machines in up-market shops, I can smell the coffee, imagine the lifestyle. If I had a coffee maker like that it could change my life, kick start my day, wake up the brain cells, achieve great things.

These beasts cost nearly £300 apiece, but in the quest for perfection, surely that's mere small change

And if all else fails, I can always go back to my little tin filter and my bright red coffee pot.

## MOTHER OF ALL BAGS

IF you thought having a baby means giving up your chic bag in favour of a frumpy rucksack covered in pale blue bunnies or pastel flowers, there's no need to panic. Now that Fleurville's MotherShip has launched in the UK, fashion conscious mums can keep their individual cool, while sporting a funky bag which doubles as your baby survival kit. And, as an owner, you'll be in good company, as the likes of A list celebrity parents Courtney Cox, Gwyneth Paltrow, Jodie Foster, Keanu Reeves, and Reece Witherspoon already have Fleurville bags. The MotherShip is the mother of all baby bags. Big enough for a whole day out, its durable, wipe-clean shell contains a host of essential "ingredients", including a wipe-clean padded changing mat, insulated bottle holder and drawstring waterproof bag for



soiled items. Additionally, it's been designed so it stays open and upright so it's always easy to access while leaving you one arm to keep baby safe. The EscapePod is perfect for those quick trips where you don't want to carry the whole kit and caboodle. Both bags come in a range of colours and patterns. For the latest stockist information, call Fleurville's UK distributor, Bibs and Stuff on (01293) 774924.

## NE window shopping



## MUSICAL SHOWERS

ROMAN Ltd, from Newton Aycliffe, supplied a shower enclosure for Tony Blackburn's bathroom, as part of the recent How Not to Decorate TV series on Five. Interior designers Colin and Justin had fitted a different shower enclosure but the DJ wasn't happy and asked them to replace it with something more substantial. A Roman Collage bi-fold door and side panel shower enclosure was chosen, featuring an inward opening door, helping to save space, with door panels which concertina together. Says Roman marketing director David Osborne: "Bathrooms are often the most difficult rooms to decorate due to their unusual dimensions and awkward existing fittings and that's why we offer shower enclosures to suit anyone's bathroom, even superstar DJ's!" Roman Limited can be found on Aycliffe Industrial Park in Newton Aycliffe, County Durham.


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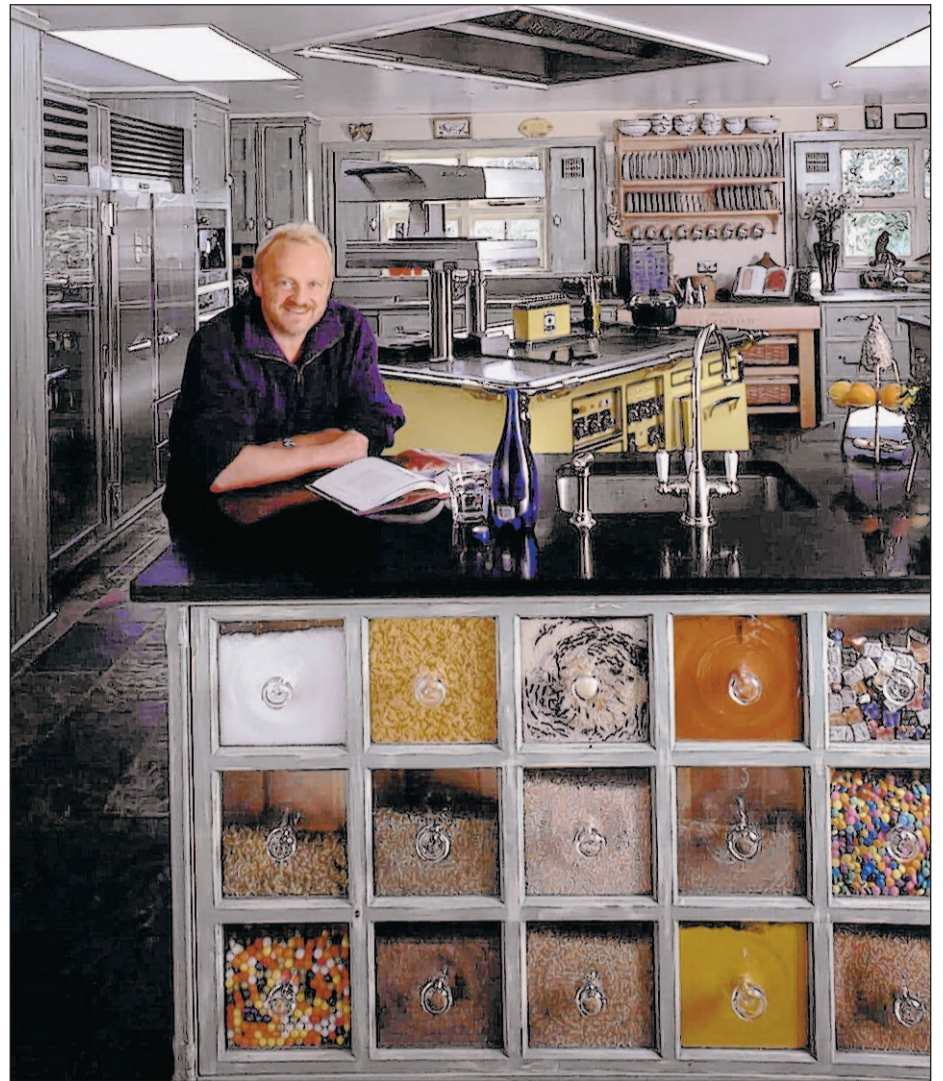
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Celebrity chef Antony Worrall Thompson in his bespoke kitchen

# What's cooking in the kitchen?

It's no longer just at parties that you'll find people in the kitchen. It's the hip place to hang out – for family and friends, says GABRIELLE FAGAN

**H**IGH-TECH kitchens have never been so hip, with the continuing popularity of celebrity cookery shows on the television.

Celebrity chef Gordon Ramsay has confessed he spent £500,000 on his home kitchen – plus a separate one for his wife. The man who grilled hapless celebrities on TV's Hell's Kitchen treated himself to state-of-the-art appliances, including a £67,000 Rorgue stove, cupboard handles mimicking the shape of a Ferrari gearstick, and a walk-in size fridge.

His kitchen was designed by Richard Baker Furniture, and Ramsay says: "I wanted a large square sink, granite worktops and splashbacks, none of which have square edges, so nothing chips easily."

Another celebrity chef, Antony Worrall Thompson also has a bespoke kitchen, created for him by furniture designer, Mark Wilkinson. It has a bright yellow range cooker, which stands in the centre of the room furnished with Provence fitted units.

"The kitchen is the heart of our home," he explains. "I needed it to be user friendly and also comfortable and welcoming for the family."

We might not all be able to afford a Ramsay room, but kitchen design companies report that home owners are spending huge amounts on what is now seen as the most important room in the house.

Designer Sebastian Conran says: "People are much more interested in food and they want a great room to prepare and eat in. Gone are the times when the kitchen was set aside and guests wouldn't enter it."

Graham Hayden, chief executive of Kitchen Bathroom Bedroom Specialists Association, adds: "The luxury kitchen market is certainly growing. The kitchen is no longer a functional room, but a reflection of people's design aspirations and lifestyle."

As for styles, David Tailford, proprietor of Fired Earth in Northallerton, says there is a definite move away from the fitted approach towards a more organic look for the kitchen, with free-standing pieces, which offer much more flexibility.

"Trends seem to be divided between a very contemporary look, with, for example, black slate or travertine floors and glass or metallic wall tiles, and a less structured look, typified by our Bastide kitchen range, with free standing units and natural materials," he says.

The emphasis is on uncluttered, practical worksurfaces, making it easy for people to look like star chefs.

## KITCHEN STYLE

**Fired Earth**, 220a High Street, Northallerton (01609) 774402

**B&Q**: 0845-222 1000/www.diy.com

**Mark Wilkinson Furniture**: (01380) 850004



### HOT FACTS ABOUT THE NATION'S COOKING HABITS

A survey on kitchens has revealed that our cookery habits are influenced by where we live.

- In general 41 per cent of people find cooking therapeutic and relaxing, while 80 per cent of us are inspired to cook for special occasions.
- **Only four per cent of us pass off caterers' food as our own.**
- 30 per cent of newlyweds suffer nerves when cooking for in-laws causing them to have accidents or ruin the food.
- **Most common mishaps are forgetting to turn the oven on, and leaving food unattended and finding that family pets have eaten it.**



THE North-East was the area where most cooks loved listening to music as they cooked, while 40 per cent said singing helps their creativity in the kitchen.

### CREATE A CELEBRITY-STYLE KITCHEN

Rebecca Tanqueray, author of *101 Ideas: Kitchens*, gives her tips on how to create a contemporary kitchen.

- Opt for clean-lined units and keep them simple, no fussy handles.
  - Use glass and stainless steel wherever you can. Frosted glass can also work well as a unit front.
  - Choose a chunky worktop – slate, concrete, recycled plastic.
  - A floating island unit in an open plan kitchen is ultra-fashionable.
  - Hide everything behind closed doors, uncluttered surfaces are key.
  - Keep walls plain, or if you want pattern, opt for textured plaster finish or a retro 1970s wallpaper.
  - Floors should be sleek and unfussy, smooth stone, wide floorboards, or a sweep of coloured rubber.
  - Choose a streamlined sink in steel or stone and dress with modern taps.
- 101 Ideas: Kitchens by Rebecca Tanqueray (Quadrille, £14.99)*



Fired Earth's Bastide kitchen furniture, above and main picture, is hand-crafted in France using traditional tongue and groove joinery. The French oak pieces are elegantly understated, with a distinctive simple design, and provide a warm and welcoming focus



Top right: B&Q Birch-style Shaker kitchen. 500mm base unit (including cabinet and door) £62

Left: Creme de la Creme kitchen by John Lewis of Hungerford

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Hodgson's choice: the bargain chandelier in the stairwell  
 Right: Richard and Kate outside the converted granary, and below right, the stained glass window Richard designed for the kitchen



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**T**WO hundred years ago a lot of hard work was done at The Mill Granary in Ingleton, grinding peas and corn. Now it's a setting for sitting around in, relaxing, sipping a glass of wine on the wooden decking and watching the sun go down over the beautiful countryside which surrounds it.

The last corn was ground many moons ago and the mill had fallen into complete disrepair. But after 11 months of hard graft, it has recently been transformed into a luxury holiday home.

The granary has been in the Hodgson family for the last 50 years. Richard, the latest generation of the family to farm the surrounding land near Darlington in County Durham, has dairy cows, but he was desperate to diversify out of farming because of the increasingly poor returns.

"There have been cows here for a few generations, but they're going in June and it's just a relief," says Richard's wife Kate. "Richard works all hours and now it's just for nothing. We get 17p a litre for our milk and need at least 20p per litre just to break even."

Fortunately for the Hodgsons, they had the perfect opportunity for diversification on their doorstep – a huge barn with holes in the roof – and at the time, Rural Enterprise Scheme grants were available through DEFRA to help with the renovations. Sitting in the perfectly appointed, clean, bright, modern dining kitchen, it's difficult to believe that there were calves and calf stalls here only a year and half ago. But the transformation didn't come about

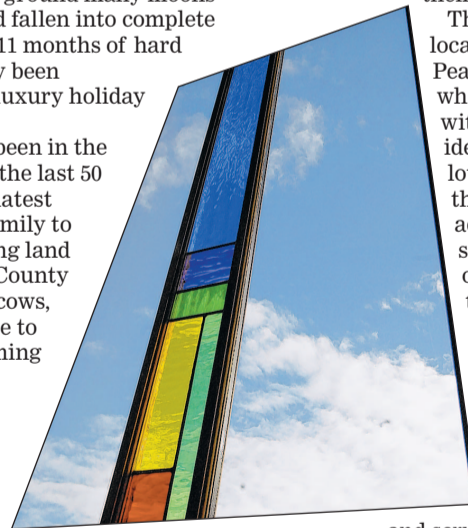
without a lot of sweat, and some tears. "If we hadn't done it up, it would have fallen to pieces," says Kate. "It's worth it now, but it was very hard work. We didn't have a holiday for more than a year and we were down here all the time." The children – Alice, eight, and seven-year-old Joseph – got so fed up with the cold and dirt, they used to beg Kate to leave them at home.

The couple employed a local builder – Mark Pearce from Ingleton – who Kate says came up with some fantastic ideas, but they also did a lot of grafting themselves. "Mark's advice was invaluable," says Kate. "You have obviously got to get the basics like the drains done right, but I put every hole in every tile on that roof and spent a lot of time going up and down ladders."

Kate also stained the wooden floors, and scrubbed and oiled all the original beams in the house. The upstairs bedrooms have high, beamed and vaulted ceilings. "It takes a lot more time than putting a flat ceiling on but it's worth it ten times over. The only beams we couldn't save were in the kitchen, they were too far gone," says Kate.

To qualify for a grant, the building had to be completely disabled friendly, hence the wide doorways, the downstairs bedroom, and huge downstairs bathroom with fold-down seat in the shower. And it's all beautifully finished.

The dining kitchen is the kind of room most guests will probably never want to leave, with huge dormitory-style table, lots of units, American-style fridge with





A lot of farmers have done up agricultural buildings to rent out to tourists, but not many have done it with as much panache as Richard and Kate Hodgson. JENNY NEEDHAM tours a stunning holiday home in County Durham

Left: the huge living kitchen with authentic butcher's block

Below left: the comfortable sitting room with French windows leading onto the decking



icemaker and water cooler, and with squishy chairs and sofa for relaxing at one end. Sunshine floods through a stained glass window – designed by Richard and made by local artist Rachel Dickinson – casting coloured light on the neutral-coloured walls.

“The oak units are second hand ones, bought from friends who run a kitchen company, and the table was from Barker and Stonehouse,” says Kate. “They often have huge tables left in the sale, because not many people can fit them into their homes.”

Happily for guests, though not for Kate, the characterful butcher's block which takes centre stage in the room, would not fit into the couple's own farmhouse. It is the genuine article from Kate's family's firm, now sold, T Manners and son in Bishop Auckland. Nearly everything else in the four bedroom house is new, from Kate's favourite shops – furniture from Barker and Stonehouse, and more quirky, individual pieces from Drum in Grange Road, Darlington; vases and other decorative pieces from The Pier; fabrics from Blaydon factory fabrics; tiles from

Susan Allison of Purple Tree; upstairs carpets from Calverts; oak floors from North Yorkshire Timber at Northallerton. The best bargains, though, have got to be two enormous chandeliers she picked up from Something Different in West Auckland for £60 each.

Windows were made by Manor Woodcraft of Evenwood – “they were brilliant,” says Kate – and Kate painted every bit of woodwork and the walls in the house herself. “I used traditional colours from Glenwoods, but kept them to a neutral and calming palette. People nowadays seem to prefer a tranquil look to the cluttered, chintzy old cottage feel,” she says. She is also a dab hand at mosaics, and the table on the patio and the mosaic pattern around the mirror in the family bathroom upstairs bear testament to her artistic skills.

For a farmer – not necessarily known for their artistic talents – Richard is similarly blessed. When he's not milking or doing up holiday cottages, he can sometimes be

▶ Continued on page 8

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Kate relaxes in the tranquil master bedroom. Below: a vase from The Pier, just £19.99

## Far from the daily grind

► Continued from page 7

found studying naked bodies at a life art class at Darlington College. And as well as designing the stained glass window in the kitchen, he also applied his talents to designing alcoves to show off decorative pieces in the smart sitting room. This is where the TV resides, and the room has French windows out onto the decking, overlooking the garden and children's play frames.

Just beyond the garden boundary is a two-acre field, ploughed up and ready to spring into life as a wildflower meadow.

"It was too wet to sow last year, but when it's grown, it will look beautiful," says Kate, who intends to mow a couple of paths through the meadow for adventurous little visitors.

So far visitors have included people from Edinburgh, London and Liverpool, as well as thespians from Darlington Civic Theatre. "We recently had the cast of Fame, and are expecting some more from High Society," says Kate.

But mostly, it is families with children or elderly parent who are a bit wobbly on their feet, or groups of friends who want to congregate in the huge kitchen for endless supper parties, who will appreciate this stunning holiday home. And they don't even have to cook for themselves. Before she took on the roles of farmer's wife, mother, decorator and roof tiler, Kate studied catering and is an accomplished cook. Guests are offered a menu to choose from and she will provide the salads for summer barbecues. At the very least, many visitors appreciate a meal waiting for them on the evening of arrival. Then all they have to do is warm it up, open the wine, throw open the patio doors and sit back and dream of the days when a lot of back-breaking work was done down at the old mill.

### ADDRESS BOOK

**Furniture:** Barker and Stonehouse; Drum, Grange Road, Darlington

**Accessories:** The Pier, Eldon Gardens, Newcastle

**Curtains and cushions:** Diane Wilkinson, Barnard Castle (01833) 631 019

**Mosaic tiles:** Discount Tiles, West Auckland (01388) 606999

**Joiner:** Cliff Brown, Bowes (01833) 628 373

**Stained glass:** dickinsonstainedglass windows@yahoo.co.uk

**Chandeliers:** Something Different, 34A Maude Terrace, St. Helen Auckland, Bishop Auckland (01388) 664366.

**Windows and Doors:** Manor Woodcraft, Unit 6/Randolph Ind Est, Evenwood, Bishop Auckland (01388) 835370

**Oak Floors:** North Yorkshire Timber, Springwell Lane, Northallerton (01609) 780777

**Carpets:** Calverts, 4 Castlegate, Thirsk (01845) 521640

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**Fabrics,** Tundry Way, Blaydon-on-Tyne Tyne And Wear (0191) 4144 515

**Limestone tiles:** Purpletree, Home Farm Offices, Hartforth, Richmond (01748) 850896;

www.purpletree.co.uk

**Builder:** Mark Pearce, Ingleton (01833) 660 182

**Tiling and decorating:** Kate Hodgson (01325) 730 339.

Kate is available for all sorts of commissions, including mosaic tables

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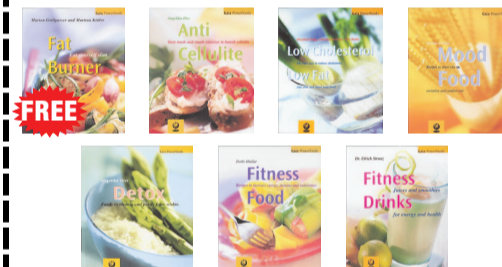
*If we hadn't done it up, it would have fallen to pieces. It's worth it now, but it was very hard work. We didn't have a holiday for more than a year*

Pictures: DAVID WOODS



From top: the family bathroom; a guest room; the ensuite for the master bedroom, where the sink is held in place using old metal hooks from the butcher's shop

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# NE gardening



SARAH FRENCH takes a walk round Swinton Park's abundant four-acre walled garden, said to be the biggest in the country



Susan Cunliffe-Lister in the walled garden, which produces more than enough fruit and veg for the hotel

Pictures: RICHARD DOUGHTY

# Greens galore and copious

# courgettes

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IN THE kitchen at Swinton Park there's the whiff of fresh inspiration in the air. Head chef Andy Burton and sous chef Paul Robinson, who even at the ages of 32 and 27 admit to having been in the game a while, are being tested like they've never been tested before.

Loveage and sorrel, beetroot and cardoons and more courgettes than they know what to do with have sent them delving into history books and onto the Internet to create dishes using the finest homegrown herbs, vegetables and fruit.

Swinton Park, near Masham in North Yorkshire, has enjoyed an excellent reputation for food since opening as a hotel four years ago but a rare and coveted ingredient, which will really come into its own this year, is set to elevate it to a new level.

The estate's restored four-acre walled garden is about to enter its second year as a major supplier to the hotel kitchen.

Paul says: "Last year was a real learning curve. Andy and I both come from country house hotel backgrounds but neither of us had worked with a walled garden before, then all of a sudden we had this great commodity."

It been a real learning experience that the team of seven in the kitchen have relished.

"We've become a lot more creative and resourceful," says Paul. "We're very forward thinking anyway but with the ingredients the garden provides, we've gone back to the roots of cooking."

"Cooks can sometimes get into routines but a garden like ours is rejuvenating. Places like it are very few and far between and in some ways it's making us learn all over again. It's exciting for us and we're trying to excite other people."

The transformation of the walled garden from Christmas tree plantation into abundant larder is the work of Susan Cunliffe-Lis-

ter. Her achievement and the journey from gate to plate is being celebrated in a series of Garden Lunches this summer.

Susan's pedigree as a gardener includes being named Country Life Gardener of the Year 2001 - she now has a column in the magazine which includes recipes from the hotel - while her gardens at Burton Agnes in East Yorkshire were voted into the top ten in the country by viewers of the BBC's Gardener's World programme in 2003.

Hers is a talent that grew from happy childhood days spent with the head gardener at the family home in Scotland and built up over years of growing vegetables at home and reading gardening magazines.

It's an interest she has passed on to her daughter Lorna Parker, who wrote a book, The Head Gardener's Reports, based on letters sent by the head gardener at Swinton Park in 1800 to his master.

Susan remembers the walled garden being in use when she was married and first came to Swinton in the Sixties, when there was a head gardener and two other garden staff.

The restoration began with cutting down the Christmas trees, brambles and nettles and digging out the stumps and roots with a tractor. A permeable fibre membrane was then laid over the ground and topped with gravel.

"In a garden this size I wanted it to be very low maintenance and that meant keeping it weed-free as far as possible," explains Susan, who spends Friday-Monday at Swinton planting, feeding and maintaining.

First in were the perennial plants like autumn-fruiting raspberries, blueberries, asparagus and artichokes, which are protected over winter with sheep fleece. It doesn't blow away and eventually rots down leaching extra nitrogen into the soil.

Susan has created trough beds for beetroot, onions and spinach, tucked alpine



● IF your lawn is looking a bit tired this spring, it might be time for a complete revamp. Turf experts Jeff and Barbara Farnaby have all the answers in an easy-to-follow leaflet from the Turf Grass Growers' Association explaining how to lay and maintain a new lawn. You can access the information online at [jbfarnabyturf.co.uk](http://jbfarnabyturf.co.uk) or telephone 0800 327622 for a leaflet. Jeff and Barbara have just welcomed their son Paul full time into their turf and soil business. J & B Farnaby, Brough Moor Farm, Scurragh Lane, Skeeby, nr Richmond [www.farnaby-turf.co.uk](http://www.farnaby-turf.co.uk); (01748) 824594

Swinton Park sous chef Paul Robinson with produce from the walled garden

strawberries into a shady area, planted a herb border of chives, mint and lemon balm and a hot slope of thyme, rosemary, basil and tarragon.

The garden is bordered with flowers for the house including roses, delphiniums, peonies and tulips, and a few old apple trees supply bramleys.

Andy and the kitchen team admit they're not gardeners but they do help harvest and their regular walks up to the garden inspire what appears on that day's dinner menu.

"We're like little children in a sweet shop," says Paul. "It's fantastic being able to structure each dish and the menu around what is coming up in the garden, which supplies more than we could ever have dreamt of."

Presumably though their suppliers aren't exactly over the moon that Swinton is becoming virtually self-sufficient? In fact, the garden produces so much that the tables may be turning towards Swinton supplying the suppliers.

"At first they didn't believe what were growing and when the reps come up to see us, their jaws just drop," says Paul. "And we still order a lot of other things from our suppliers."

The sometimes overflowing basket can cause some headaches – the kitchen has just finished using last autumn's pumpkins, for instance.

"Last year we couldn't pick the globe artichokes fast enough," admits Susan.

Then there are those courgettes. "The kitchen was getting a bit sick of them; some of the staff didn't know that if left too long they become marrows. But it's still better to have too many than not enough and they used the flowers a lot," she adds.

After the rhubarb, asparagus and wild garlic in May, guests at the Garden Lunches can look forward to strawberries, early new potatoes and garden peas. "It was great last year after Sunday lunch, sitting out the back with

the boys shelling peas, very relaxing," recalls Paul.

July will bring blueberries, salad herbs and the first raspberries. Susan is trying six varieties of blueberries this year, traditionally difficult to grow but the conditions at Swinton – soft acid water from the moors and a relatively acid soil – suit them.

When it comes to feeding, she prefers to use her own intuition and experience than be told what she can and cannot use on the garden. "I'm not totally organic because I always use what's best for the plant," she says. "It's quite an art growing vegetables; if you can grow a good crop from a packet of seed then you can pretty much grow anything."

She uses a selection of feeds including seaweed fertiliser, but admits: "If something is covered in a horrid disease I will zap it. So far I've only had to spray the flowers, not the vegetables."

That old enemy of fruit – wasps – are a menace so traps are set for them, while slugs are caught in beer traps. Netting is laid to keep rabbits off, which, thanks to the garden wall, only get in if a careless guest leaves the gate open.

While the garden is certainly in no way an experiment, Susan is still refining what and how much is planted.

The chefs, meanwhile, continue to discover just how many ways you can cook a courgette.

● The Garden Lunches hosted by Susan Cunliffe-Lister include a two-course lunch and coffee served in the award-winning Samuel's restaurant, a talk on the history of the parkland and walled garden and a guided tour of the grounds. The charge is £20 per person. To book call Swinton Park on (01765) 680900 or e-mail [enquiries@swintonpark.com](mailto:enquiries@swintonpark.com)  
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## NE fashion



Joanne McCue, centre, with Hollie Bannatyne, left, and Sophia Zielke, right, who are modelling some of the jewellery available at Lone Star Emporium

# Razzle dazzle

A new costume jeweller's is bringing Hollywood bling to the North-East. SARAH FOSTER is dazzled by its charms

**S**TEPPING into Lone Star, on Yarm High Street, is like entering another world. Gone are the grey buildings and drab daylight; replaced by shelf upon shelf of shimmering colour. The walls are painted in pretty pastels, with swirling tendrils of plants, and right opposite the door is the image of an exotic-looking woman. This is no place for the timid – it screams serious, full-on glamour – and if you're not up to that, well it's probably not for you.

Sisters Joanne McCue and Jacquie Wilby own the

shop, and it is clearly their passion. As we wander round, they show me some of their favourite things – of which seemingly, there are many. In fact, the pair admit to snapping up items before they even reach the shelves, then having to find replacements.

Two fashionable blondes, they're perfect ambassadors for their business – and seem only too happy to act as models. "We've always loved jewellery," admits Joanne, 38.

At Lone Star, which opened in early March, the jewellery is big and bold – think Dynasty-style diamante or showgirl sparkles. My first reaction is that it's too much – something I'd never get away with – then Joanne takes a dazzling blue choker and holds it up to her neck. Seeing it against her skin, it looks beautiful. I can't imagine wearing it with a ball gown, but with a simple black dress – now that could be stunning.

As Joanne and Jacquie point out, you don't even need an occasion to wear their jewellery. They often match it with a top and jeans, and it can really jazz up a tired outfit. Along with necklaces and chokers, they sell brooches, jewelled belts and tiaras, with earrings ranging from the slightly showy to full-blown chandeliers. To complement these – it's very much this way round – you can buy clothes from a select range or a distinctive bag, perhaps with even more gems.

If everything looks unique, that's because it practically is. "With there only being one or two of each item, it does strengthen the exclusivity. We're really conscious of that," says Joanne.

The sisters have only just gone into business together, having come from other careers – Joanne as a nurse and Jacquie as a secretary. "I've been in business before and





## Win Penelope Cruz's necklace

THE Northern Echo has teamed up with Lone Star to offer a lucky reader the chance to win a necklace similar to that worn by Penelope Cruz, as pictured above. Worth £269, it is made from coloured quartz and Swarovski crystal in stunning emerald green. To have a chance of winning this fantastic prize, simply tell us which famous barrister Butler and Wilson boasts among its clientele.

Send your answer on a postcard or the back of a sealed envelope to **Necklace Competition, NE Magazine, Features, The Northern Echo, Priestgate, Darlington, DL1 1NF**, to be received by June 24, 2005.



This fantastic necklace could be yours



Jacque left her job knowing that we were going to do something together," Joanne explains. "We were able to do it so we felt we wanted to do something exciting."

Their shared love of jewellery seemed an obvious starting point, and inspiration came from shopping trips to London. "We've got a sister who lives in London and I used to live there, and every time we went on shopping trips we always went to Butler and Wilson," says Joanne.

With branches on South Moulton Street and Fulham Road, and one soon to open in Monte Carlo, the costume jeweller's is beloved of the stars, boasting Cherie Blair among its clientele.

The sisters became such frequent visitors that they befriended owner Simon Wilson – and a partnership ensued. "We decided over a drink that we wanted to do something with him. We now buy wholesale from him," says Joanne.

She and Jacque have since landed another prestigious contract – as the only shop in the North-East supplying jewellery by Erickson Beamon. Using semi-precious stones, Lone Star pieces bridge the gap

between high street fakes and the genuine articles, which, for most, would be unaffordable. Prices range from £19 to £130 for earrings and £35 to £400 for necklaces.

To the sisters, they're the perfect compromise. "I feel that if I'm spending £500 or £1,000 on a dress, I don't want to spend £500 on a necklace, but then I don't want to go to Next either," says Joanne.

What makes their jewellery seem even more special is seeing celebrities wearing it – Jacque reels off names like Caprice, Normandie Keith and Emma Bunton. These days, it seems, no self-respecting magazine shoot is without a pair of their dangly earrings or one of their stone-encrusted chokers.

For their part, Joanne and Jacque are delighted that bling is back – and are only too happy to have brought it to the North-East. "The accessories weren't there a few years ago but now the market has become a lot more exciting," says Joanne.

*I feel that if I'm spending £500 or £1,000 on a dress, I don't want to spend £500 on a necklace, but then I don't want to go to Next either...*



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## me and my wardrobe

*I really think about things before I buy, so I don't tend to have impulse buys*



Pictures:  
RICHARD DOUGHTY

**CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE:**  
White shirt from Rayure, Paris; Barbara Bui black trousers  
White jeans, Fenwicks; Karen Millen cardigan  
Celine black jacket; Topshop jeans



Ginny Dick, from Little Fencote in North Yorkshire, gets 'most stylish mother at the school gates' award from CAROLINE TURNER. Ginny is married with two children and runs a successful handmade jewellery business from home

**HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR LOOK?**  
Fairly classic – with a twist. I'm not a huge follower of fashion, but I know what suits me; it tends to be jeans from Topshop, cashmere jumpers and smart jackets.

**WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE ITEM OF CLOTHING?**

A little black jacket by Celine. I can put it on with jeans, smart black trousers, a skirt... it really looks good with everything; very versatile.

**WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR WORST BUY?**

I'm indecisive and I really think about things before I buy so I don't tend to have impulse buys and then regret them. But I suppose it would be a black and purple bustier top. Not a good look.

**AND WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR MOST EXPENSIVE?**

That would be the Celine jacket I mentioned, although it was in the sale at £180, reduced from £360, so really it was a bargain.

**WHAT ARE YOUR FAVOURITE SHOPS?**

Top Shop (great for longer length jeans); Selfridges when I'm in London, because there's everything in one shop; Zara.

**WHICH CELEBRITY'S STYLE DO YOU ADMIRE AND WHY?**

(Has a long hard think...) I admire the way Kate Moss can wear whatever she likes and look so good. Erin O'Connor has a very particular look and a sense of style that's absolutely her own. But you could never better the classic look of Audrey Hepburn, Grace Kelly, and Jackie Onassis – they were true style icons.

**WHO'S YOUR FAVOURITE DESIGNER?**

It would have to be my brother (the couture king Giles Deacon). His clothes are absolutely exquisite.

**Jewellery throughout, Ginny's own from her current range. Earrings from around £20 to £35; bracelets from £59; necklaces from £85 to around £150.**

**Ginny D jewellery is available from www.ginnyd.co.uk. Local stockists include Georgie's in Harrogate and Northallerton and Elan on Grange Road in Darlington. Visit the Ginny D stand at the Bramham Horse Trials in North Yorkshire from June 9-12. Contact Ginny via the web site or tel: 07739 258568/01609 748750. Vouchers available.**



# NE out on the town

NE Magazine's style experts scout the social honeypots of the region in search of style and individuality



## McCourt & McKay

**T**HE streets leading into Middlesbrough were very quiet on the Sunday night we walked into the Absolut Vodka Bar, where another world confronted us. We were greeted by friendly door staff and overwhelmed by the volume of people all dressed up, and not an offensive drunken person in sight.

Hush nightclub, on the corner of Albert Road and Wilson Street, is next door to Absolut and has just celebrated its first birthday. We spoke briefly to manager Neil and what became apparent was that within the first year of Hush opening, they are meeting their objectives by providing a venue where people can enjoy house music, fashion and socialising in an environment that is safe and welcoming. The décor is modern and minimalist and, in both Absolut and Hush, the clientele is creative, colourful and young.

Absolut is open from Wednesday until Sunday and Hush from 10.30pm-2pm Thursday until Sunday, when it closes at 1pm

### SARAH MCGHEE

SARAH is 18 and studies travel and tourism at college. She also waitresses at the new stylish bar and restaurant in Yarm called The Riverlounge. She was with friends with whom she enjoys the music and the cool atmosphere. She likes to shop in Triads and Psyche for



something a bit different but also mixes her outfits with high street fashion labels. Sarah wore shoes by Faith, jeans by Fornarina from Triads, a top from River Island and this season's most popular accessory, a big belt, from Miss Selfridge. At 18, you shouldn't have to work too hard at looking good but Sarah's advice is no matter what your age, drink two litres of water a day and stick to subtle make-up.

### CHRIS POUNDER

CHRIS is 20 years old and studying business management. His favourite music is house, which is why his favourite bar and club are Absolute and Hush. Chris was wearing an Adidas jacket, Vondutch T-shirt, Converse shoes and Osaka jeans. His favourite label is Vivienne Westwood, which he heads off to Leeds to buy, but for a local good shopping spree he goes to Triads or Psyche. To combat the occasional skin outburst, Chris recommends tea tree oil, lots of water and listening to a good house CD.

### SARAH HUDSON

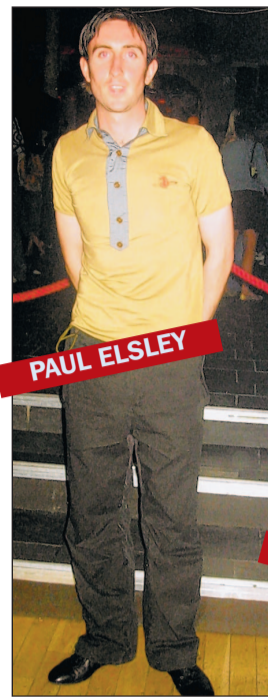
SARAH, 18 is at college studying A-levels. Sarah's made her own outfit from a shawl she bought on holiday and we gave it top marks. Obviously, she's a girl who likes to be individual but when it comes to buying something off the rack, she heads to All Saints in Leeds. We thought Sarah glowed and she says "to look good and feel good, you have to eat well and drink well (and that means healthily, not alcopops!)."

### STE JOHNSON

STE is 24 and a builder. He enjoys a Sunday night at Hush for the house music and stylish atmosphere. His trousers were by Maharashi, t-shirt by Dries Van Noten. Ste reckons you don't have to travel too far to get good fashion and Newcastle and Leeds are his favourite shopping destinations. Drinking lots of water and listening to house music keep his energy levels up.

● TV and radio presenter Judie McCourt and hair and make-up artist Allison McKay, run AM Creative Productions, which specialises in creative and social event management and PR.

amcreativeproductions.com



### PAUL ELSLEY

PAUL is a 25-year-old builder with a passion for "hed kandi" (house music). His fashion accessory is his hair, which he credits to Toni and Guy, and he says his good health is down to eating lots of salads. Paul wore a shirt by Vivienne Westwood, trousers by Maharishi and shoes by Prada.

### HAYLEY SIRRELL

THE beautiful Hayley is 19 and studying crime scene science at Teesside University. Hayley wears whatever she feels good in and had on a top from Dorothy Perkins, jeans from Triads by Levi-Red, a D&G watch, Topshop shoes, a Louis Vuitton bag and a necklace from Accessorise.

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**TEAM VALLEY**



**Thinking big**

At the heart of Gateshead's Team Valley trading estate lies the shoppers' paradise of Retail World. SARAH FOSTER samples its supersized delights

**D**RIVING along the A1 towards Newcastle, you'd be forgiven for missing Retail World. You'd probably spot the factories of Team Valley, but might never think that within their smoky environs lies a shopping haven. However, just a short distance from the motorway, down one of the many turnings, are a host of super stores.

Driving into the vast free car park - one of Retail World's biggest advantages - you'll be struck by the size of the shops. These are not so much shops as warehouses, each covering thousands of square metres. Immediately, you can appreciate that they would never fit into a high street setting, which is the beauty of Retail World - with so much space, the sky is literally the limit.

Established in 1987, the shopping area stemmed from the light industry which still thrives in Team Valley. Among its 700 acres there are factories making everything from fridges to photo albums, with new businesses arriving all the time.

Retail World is also in a state of flux. Having started with mainly furniture and electrical stores, it's evolving all the time, adding new units to keep up with demand. Nowadays, the range of retailers is pretty impressive. Whether you want wallpaper or evening wear, a potted plant or patio furniture, you are sure to find it in one of the well-stocked aisles.

The shopping area has kept its good name for electrical goods, with a large Currys, Comet and Powerhouse. Step inside any of them and you'll find the latest televisions, digital radios and stereos, as well as shining new household appliances. The choice and competition are only to the customer's advantage, as is demonstrated by price matching and special offers, and it's well worth taking the time to find the best deal.

If Retail World's reputation was built on electrical goods, then it was also built on furniture, and in this field also, it remains strong. A DIYers dream, it boasts a huge MFI and Homebase, as well as a Harveys and DP Furniture Express. Those more interested in soft furnishings are well catered for by the likes of Rosebys and Allied Carpets. One of the site's most famous names is Next, which has successfully adapted from the high street to a trading estate setting. Like all the others, the store is vast,

ranging over two extensive floors. The bottom floor is taken up by women's and childrenswear, attractively set out with plenty of space, while upstairs, there's an impressive men's section and the store's piece de resistance - the large furniture department.

Operations manager Steve Wilmott says that here especially, the extra square metres come into their own. "At any one time we can have five or six different sets of room furniture out. A lot of people come here especially for the furniture," he says.

While admitting that Retail World lacks the bustle of the high street, Mr Wilmott says it offers a different kind of shopping experience. "I think it's just an alternative. The main advantage is that people can park outside," he says.

One of Team Valley's most unusual stores is the First Choice Holiday Hypermarket. The only travel agent, it may seem a little out of place, but as an attraction, it more than holds its own. Coming through the doors, you're greeted by the huge galleon which acts as the customer services desk. Looking down from the walls are singing statues, including Captain Pugwash and the Statue of Liberty, and in the far corner is a life-sized car that's really a computer game. The store is packed with brochures spanning the globe, and there's a 1950s-style café, Joe's Diner, where you can sit and ponder them at your leisure. Once you've chosen your accommodation, you can even see it on a plasma screen in the Holiview cinema.

Sales assistant Nichola Jury says the holiday starts in-store. "At weekends, we tend to do games and things and it just boosts people. There's always a really good atmosphere," she says.

Staff will always try to find the best deal - no matter what your budget or requirements. "We get families, older people, people who just want £99 holidays and cruise customers," says Nichola. "Obviously at weekends and holidays, we tend to get more families."

As a one-stop shop, First Choice takes care of everything, including car parking and currency. Those who can't wait to reach the resort can start planning their holiday fun by buying water park passes.

With so many stores offering so much choice, and a handy McDonalds to refuel at, Retail World comes with extra large appeal.





Team Valley Retail World: the First Choice Holiday Hypermarket, above and below; bottom: table and chairs from Cottage Cane

LIFE COACH

Always look on the bright side...



**M**AY is a hopeful time with the promise of warmer, sunnier days ahead. But when you get out of bed in the morning, how do you generally feel about the day ahead? Do you look forward to what might happen or do you have a bland, greyish feeling about life?

An optimistic attitude makes a world of difference to how you experience life. If you look for the good in situations and people, you can find it. It takes seeing things from a different perspective. Our mind will focus on whatever we tell it to. If you look for doom and gloom, you will find it. What a waste of energy!

Cultivate a positive attitude this month. Don't let lethargy and greyness dominate your life. Practise looking for the brighter side of life. Slowly but surely, it will transform you. "Hope is the thing with feathers that perches in the soul, and sings the tune without the words...and never stops at all." – Emily Dickinson

(01748) 823010  
www.juliettelee.co.uk  
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Juliette Lee

TEAM VALLEY TRADERS

**T**HE Embers Fireplace Centre has a stunning showroom, with a large range of modern and traditional fireplaces to suit all tastes and budgets. There are more than 60 individual displays and an excellent range of gas and electric fires, many of which are flueless.

The company is also a specialist for stylish hole-in-the-wall fires with around 15 gas and electric ranges to choose from, priced from just £650.

Also available are combi boilers, back boilers and full tailor-made central heating systems – all of which can be professionally fitted by Embers' own team of Corgi-registered fitters. Just ask about a free survey and interest-free options.

● **Embers, Lobley Hill Road (bottom part of Bensham Bank at the end of Saltwell Road), Gateshead 0191-478 6678. The showroom is open seven days a week, 9.30am-5pm Monday to Saturday and 11am-3pm Sundays. Free parking.**

WALTER Dix was founded in 1888 and has been a primary distributor of Aga products – the centrepiece of many a stylish kitchen – throughout the North-East since 1931. The company has had a showroom on the Team Valley since 1988, when it moved from Brunton Park.

Today, the company offers a spectacular choice of cookers, from the chic, contemporary ranges that Aga have now adopted as well as the traditional styles introduced in the 1920s.

The showroom is relaxed and informal and if you can't make up your mind straight away, just take a brochure home and plan that dream kitchen.

● **Walter Dix, 1 Stirling Court, 11th Avenue North, Team Valley 0191-482 0033**

COTTAGE Cane is a family-run company, which was established in 1979. All the company's suites are upholstered in their own factory to the most exhaustive standards. At Cottage Cane there have more than 20 suites and dozens of hard



wearing fabrics to choose from. All suites have matching tables and footstools, giving a huge number combinations which would enhance any conservatory.

● **Cottage Cane, Mayoral Way, Team Valley 0191-487 5861; also North Tyne Industrial Estate, Benton, Newcastle and Portrack Lane, Stockton**



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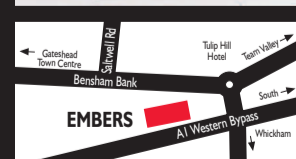
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Models shown Yaris Colour Collection 1.0 VVT-i 3 door manual, manufacturer's list price £9,995, save £1,100. Corolla Colour Collection 1.4 VVT-i 3 door manual, manufacturer's list price £10,995. †advertised offer only available on Yaris Colour Collection 1.0 VVT-i 3 door manual ordered and registered between 1st April and 30th June 2005, at participating Centres. Price correct at time of going to press and include VAT, delivery charge, number plates, one year's road fund licence and £38 first registration fee. Subject to availability. \*Hatchback only. †Not available on estate models.  
Yaris 1.0 VVT-i Official Fuel Consumption Figures in mpg (l/100km). Urban 41.5 (6.8). Extra Urban 57.6 (4.9). Combined 50.4 (5.6). CO2 Emissions 134 g/km. Corolla 1.4 VVT-i Official Fuel Consumption Figures in mpg (l/100km). Urban 33.6 (8.4). Extra Urban 49.6 (5.7). Combined 42.2 (6.7). CO2 Emissions 159 g/km.

## gadget man



# Beating speed cameras on the cheap



● Don't miss Burton's Bytes – game reviews in The Northern Echo every Friday

The proliferation of speed cameras is proving costly for tens of thousands of motorists. But there is a way technology can help

IT'S the moment every driver hopes will never happen. That flash in the rear view mirror that alerts you to the fact that your car has been travelling too fast and been caught on camera.

Today there are more than 4,500 speed cameras on 24-hour patrol throughout Britain. If the Government gets its way, there will many more in the next few years.

Ironically, the speed camera was invented by a Dutch rally driver – as a way of making cars go faster. He reasoned that a camera capable of measuring speed was the perfect way to clip vital seconds off cornering and braking. Unfortunately, countries looking for a cheap way to catch drivers who transgressed national speed limits also welcomed the idea.

Until now, car drivers have meekly accepted their fate when caught on camera. But there is a way to stack the odds in your favour – and it is perfectly legal. What's more, it isn't even very expensive.

Sales of devices that can detect speed cameras before a car passes through a trap increased by 122 per cent in 2004. The Government is determined to ban active detectors that scan for the radar waves given off by radar guns and speed traps, but it takes a far more sanguine approach to satellite navigation, which can track your whereabouts from space and alert you if a camera is coming up.

These handy gizmos use the same sophisticated GPS technology as in-car guidance systems. Three satellites in a stationary orbit triangulate your position and can map it to a few feet. Then they compare your position with a database of speed cameras and if you are approaching a trap, they trigger a "slow down" alert in good time.

These devices have been on the market for a few years but, until now, they are always been so expensive that only the most paranoid of drivers forked out. The Road Angel, for example, is easily fitted in your car using a simple windscreen mount, but it costs £399.

You don't have that kind of cash to splash? Enter a new gadget called the Inforad. Distributed in the UK by Toad (the car alarm folks), Inforad is a GPS radar detect-

ing device without the extras that makes its rivals so expensive.

Instead of a hard to see LCD display, there are three LEDs – green, yellow and red. If the green light is glowing, your Inforad is awake, tuned into the satellite network and protecting you. If it beeps and flashes red, your car has entered a risk area and a camera site is likely to be coming up shortly. It's time to check your speed and slow down. The yellow LED lights up for user defined points (regular mobile trap spots or schools ahead) to warn of trouble.

You can even set the Inforad to monitor your speed and sound a beep if the car exceeds a set level. This feature is really handy on motorways with temporary 50mph limits where speeds tend to creep back up to 70mph.

Even better, if you have access to the Internet, your little detector can be linked to the Inforad website for up-dates. A download takes a few minutes and equips the device with details of new speed camera sites that are cropping up all the time.

It's brilliant and it works. I used it in Cleveland and the little box never failed me.

And to help protect your licence while driving abroad, the Inforad covers fixed camera sites in France, Germany, Benelux, Austria and Switzerland as well.

The price of this peace of mind? A mere £79.99. Updates are free for the first year and cost £24.95 annually thereafter.

Even a first speeding offence can be financially punitive. On average, your insurance will go up ten per cent and because convictions mean higher premiums for years, the cumulative effect of your inattention can run into the hundreds.

If you cover a lot of miles, Inforad will pay for itself the first time you avoid a camera fine – and go on paying for itself with every mile you cover.

● Inforad is available from motor accessory stores and branches of Maplins. For more details point your PC to [www.gpsinforad.co.uk](http://www.gpsinforad.co.uk).

● If you are driving to somewhere new, log on to [Ukgatsos.com](http://Ukgatsos.com) or [Ukspeedcameras.co.uk](http://Ukspeedcameras.co.uk) for advance warning of what to expect.

NE fashion

# Gowns you'll love to say 'I do' to



Dresses by Ian Stuart

After the service and reception, the focus of any wedding is The Dress. Faced with so much choice, where do you go and what do you choose?

**F**ROM the moment your loved one gets down on bended knee and asks you the question you've been waiting for, thoughts of walking down the aisle in a wedding dress will most likely flash through your mind.

After all, your wedding dress is going to be most important dress that you'll ever buy – and the one you want to be perfect. Every bride, whether traditional or contemporary, wants to look her best, which makes picking a dress a bit of an ordeal.

Geoff Brady and his team at Principia know how daunting it can be, so their first job when a bride-to-be walks through the door is to make her feel relaxed. "The main thing is to offer a warm welcome and be enthusiastic but calm. There is a lot to take in and you don't want to feel rushed or overwhelmed," says Geoff.

Principia started life 25 years ago as Pronuptia and Youngs, run by Geoff's parents John and Beryl Brady. Originally from Felling, Gateshead, John worked for British Steel and Beryl for the National Coal Board before the family moved to Marske, Cleveland.

When John was made redundant, Beryl decided to put her seamstress skills to use by opening the shop and doing alterations herself. Meanwhile, son Geoff had his own career in the motor industry before he took over the business when his parents retired. "People ask how I moved from cars to wedding dresses, but customer service and selling skills are the same whatever the business," he explains.

That said, Geoff leaves the selling of dresses to his all-female team, led by supervisor Lesley Phillips. These days clients include the daughters of brides who were John and Beryl's customers when they first

launched the business. As well as being renowned for making customers comfortable, the range of dresses at Principia is chosen to be inspirational while the assistants have plenty of experience to help brides make their choice.

Geoff says: "Our philosophy is it's the bride's wedding and no matter how many pictures she's looked at and how much advice she's had, there is only one person who can say whether she is comfortable in the dress and that's the bride herself."

Ivory remains a favourite, but soft pink, dresses combining two different colours like cream and oyster or ivory and black, and bold choices like scarlet are also proving popular.

Designers include Ronald Joyce, Forever Yours, Romantica, DG Collection, Alfred Angelo and Benjamin Roberts with prices ranging from £145 up to £2,000 for a gown by Ian Stuart, Bridal Buyer Designer of the Year.

Once a customer orders a dress, it can take up to 20 weeks to come. After a fitting in the shop, the dress is sent away for any alterations to one of Principia's experienced seamstresses, which include Beryl and her sister Joan Ridden, who worked for Princess Diana's wedding dress designers Elizabeth and David Emmanuel. The same process happens with the bridesmaid dresses.

Principia doesn't hire out dresses. "When they're worn constantly and altered to fit, it's difficult to maintain the quality," says Geoff. "It only costs a few more pounds to buy and we've found most brides think it's worth it to have a dress that fits properly and is exactly what they're looking for."

Men can hire their suits, frockcoats, waistcoats and cravats, which come in colours and designs to complement the bridesmaid range.

There's also a huge selection of tiaras and headdresses, veils, bags and shoes. Geoff is looking into adding wedding shoes suitable for brides in wheelchairs, after consulting with paralympic champion Dame Tanni Grey-Thompson.

● Principia, 20 Dundas Street, Middlesbrough (01642) 224554



*It only costs a few more pounds to buy and we've found most brides think it's worth it to have a dress that fits properly*

– Principia's Geoff Brady

## WIN vouchers to spend at EAST

**E**AST has teamed up with NE Magazine to offer readers the chance to win vouchers worth £500 to spend on EAST clothing and accessories. We are offering a first prize of £250 in vouchers, a second prize of £150 in vouchers and a third prize of £100 in vouchers.

Visit the EAST stores located on Saddler Street in Durham, James Street in Harrogate, Davygate in York and in Fenwick Newcastle and update your spring wardrobe with a stylish selection of casual and dressy separates.

Look chic and casual in a gorgeous ethnic kaftan and a pretty crinkle skirt or in a cotton wrap top with a bold stripe skirt. For a tailored look, wear linen trousers with a long linen coat and combine with an eye-catching necklace. Alternatively, go fun and flirty with the new Mexican collection full of bright reds and big embroidered motifs on skirts.

Accessorise your wardrobe with a wide range of bags from timeless, functional city pieces to bags embellished with beads, feathers and sequins. Striking jewellery, soft hats, pretty scarves and tie belts complete a collection which will inspire you.

This spring it is all about teaming exclusive prints and bold colours. So if you want a new look this season, then the friendly and knowledgeable staff at



EAST will be able to help you select your new wardrobe.

**Question:** Name two places where an EAST store is located.

**Competition Rules**

This competition closes on May 20, 2005, when the winners and runners-up will be selected at random from the correct entries received. The judges' decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into. The prize must be accepted as offered, there is no cash alternative. Employees of The Northern Echo and/or East Ltd and their families are not eligible to enter this competition.

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Colt 1.1 Red manual fuel consumption in mpg (ltrs/100km): Urban 40.4 (7.0), Extra Urban 61.4 (4.6), Combined 51.4 (5.5), CO2 emissions 130g/km.

NE motoring



The Mitsubishi Colt: responses are sharp and fun and it cruises happily

# A cute little workhorse

Motoring Correspondent IAN LAMMING finds himself enamoured of a little Colt with pots of pedigree

#### Mitsubishi Colt 1.3 Mirage

I'VE a confession to make. Twelve long years ago I said a couple of unkind things about two Mitsubishi test cars. The press officer took umbrage and I was blacked. Five years later I asked for forgiveness but he wasn't the forgiving type and he said no.

A little harsh but then it was his test fleet and I've managed to get by for more than a decade without Mitsubishi in my life. It would have been nice to try the Evo but then I always had the Subaru Impreza to fall back on and it was nearly the same. The rest of the range went largely unnoticed, so there.

Recently though, I must admit, my curiosity has been invoked again by some interesting looking Mitsubishi, not least the cute looking Colt. Tees Valley Mitsubishi, of Darlington, came to the rescue, offering NE Magazine the chance to get behind the wheel of the 1.3, three-door Mirage and my re-acquaintance with the brand was complete.

It's not often small hatchbacks catch the eye but the Colt is particularly striking. In a tiny package it marries excellent proportions and cuteness with sporty flair and ultra-modern lines. The back end is Alfa-esque, which can only be a good thing, given the Italians' ability to style. The front is like a bullet and the car looks good from any angle.

This uncharacteristic-for-the-class appeal extends inside to one of the nicest interiors I've come across for a good while in a small car. The chunky steering wheel frames a beautiful set of hooded clocks, which, again, wouldn't look out of place in Italy.

While the clocks are classic the rest of the dash and centre console are 21st century, using opalescent materials to provide a hi-tech feel. The rest of the interior offers the eye a feast of shapes and textures to keep the owner interested and involved.

A steeply raked windscreen gives the feeling of space and very soon you forget you are in a small car at all. Rear seat passengers also

get a reasonable amount of leg room and it is hard to understand where the engineers found all the space, given that the boot is a good size too.

Front seats are body-hugging adding to the air of sportiness and all the controls fall easily to hand and feet, making the Colt a comfortable car to drive. Specification is good too and the Mirage comes with a trip computer offering all manner of information, including the all-important distance-to-empty read-out.

There is central locking, electric windows, remote release for the boot, ABS brakes and airbags, driver's seat height adjuster and a CD player. Mirage also gets 16in alloy wheels, rear roof spoiler, front fog lamps and a natty red interior.

Even before a wheel is turned, the little Colt impresses no end. The driving experience adds icing to the cake. The 1.3 litre four-cylinder engine is peppy and willing with 94bhp on tap, providing an excellent power-to-weight ratio. Around town it will zip away from the lights and out of it there's more than enough poke to overtake slow moving traffic in safety. It will cruise happily on the motorway and return decent miles per gallon - what more could you ask?

Handling is tuned to match the zestful motor and responses are sharp and fun. Its agility is mirrored by great poise, grip and cornering ability and it feels nicely planted through the bends. For a small car, the ride feels particularly grown-up, offering comfort as well as control.

Given my history with Mitsubishi it would be all too easy to run scared of criticising the new Colt. Let me assure you that if I could, I would. But I can't, so I won't. Truth is, I couldn't really find anything wrong with it and found the little hatchback most endearing.

Who knows, maybe the Colt is the olive branch being offered my way to end a needless feud that lasted a dozen unnecessary years.



IN ASSOCIATION WITH

# NE connections

## Make sure you're well covered this summer

**M**OST travellers spend more time choosing their sun cream than their holiday insurance. We either buy it when we book and never give it a second thought, or buy it later but never bother to find out what we're actually covered for.

For those who do read the small print, the test is often to find out if you'd be covered if your break is cancelled, not if you break your leg.

Being compensated for lost luggage or missed flights may be top of the worry list, yet the vast majority of insurance payouts are taken up by medical costs. And if you're not covered adequately, you could find your bargain trip turning into an expensive disaster.

"It's the difference between a few hundreds pounds if your suitcase goes missing and thousands if the worst happens and you end up having a prolonged stay in hospital," says Veronica Ryan, retail operations manager at BiB insurance brokers in Darlington.

According to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, two days in a general ward in the Mediterranean costs £600, having a heart attack in the US could be as much as £35,000 while seven days inpatient treatment for bronchitis in the Far East costs £15,000.

But BiB has evidence that shows the reality is far higher - nearly £47,000 for a spinal injury caused in a swimming pool accident in Cyprus, £25,242 for an eye injury in Spain and nearly £145,000 for treatment for a severe asthma attack in the US.

Some countries have mutual healthcare agreements with the UK which entitle holidaymakers to reciprocal state-provided health services as long as they can produce a stamped European Insurance Card, formerly known as the E111, which is available from Post Offices.

The arrangement covers travel within the European Economic Area including EC countries, plus Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway. The UK also has reciprocal agreements with Australia, New Zealand, certain Caribbean islands and most republics of the former Soviet Union, including Russia.

Even then the level of care may not be what you would expect at home, and the agreement doesn't cover all the expenses you might incur. It never covers your repatriation, for example.

To ensure all your extra costs will be met, you still need good quality insurance cover. "Many people buy off-the-shelf policies but the medical cover aspect of travel insurance often comes with a lot of criteria which have to be measured against each traveller's individual situation," explains Veronica.

Most of these requirements for eligibility fall under the 'health declaration' section.

In particular, this asks for information about any pre-existing conditions; if you have one, you must tell your insurer or you may not be covered.

It will also ask about how long you've had the condition, if you're still undergoing treatment, how long since you last had treatment and so on, that it's not a terminal condition and that you know of no other reason why your trip would be likely to be cancelled or cut short.

As a rule of thumb, it's best to declare everything. Similarly, if your condition changes after

you've bought your policy but before you travel, you need to declare this.

Certain conditions, such as heart problems, may not be covered by a standard policy and you might need specialist insurance.

Failing to meet the requirements of the health declaration or not understanding its importance causes the most problems for travellers, according to Janet Reynolds, of Fortis insurance, one of the UK's biggest travel insurance providers.

She says part of the problem is caused by the way in which travel insurance is sold. She recommends holidaymakers buy their policy from a broker or directly from an insurance company.

Janet says: "You wouldn't go to a motor mechanic for legal advice or a lawyer to fix your plumbing, so why would you buy important financial services on which your life might depend from anyone other than an insurance professional?"

"They understand the implications of the health declaration; they'll know the questions you should ask and information you need to declare for your individual circumstances, which you can discuss in private."

Assuming you can get cover, you then need to look at what is actually included and ask questions like:

- How much cover is provided for any medical problems? The Foreign and Commonwealth Office recommends the level of medical cover should be at least £1m for Europe and £2m for the rest of the world. Typically, travellers go for the cheapest premium but a low price policy may provide less cover.

- Are your repatriation costs covered? Bear in mind you might need to be transported by specialist air ambulance which can cost as much as £35,000 from the US. A seat on a scheduled flight, with stretcher and doctor escort from Australia will cost £8,500 or up to £4,500 from the Mediterranean.

- Does it include 24-hour emergency assistance for your intended destination?

- Does it cover you for adventure sports? "People have to take a certain amount of responsibility for their own actions in these circumstances but as long as it's a professionally supervised activity, a good quality policy will cover you," explains Janet.

Ski slopes are one of the top five locations for holiday injuries and skiing holidays must be covered separately as part of a special policy.

Another one to watch out for is motorbike hire. You should check exactly what you're covered to ride before you rent your bike.

It's also advisable to find out beforehand your insurer's policy if you were to hurt yourself while drunk on holiday.

While reading the smallprint of your insurance policy might be the last thing on your mind when you're shopping for swimwear or cancelling the papers, you should always make sure you read its terms and conditions.

Veronica adds: "It's completely legal to travel without insurance but without it you are taking a serious risk of not being able to access the care you need or facing enormous bills. Our advice to travellers is to think money, passport, insurance, and not to leave it too close to your trip before arranging it."

IN ASSOCIATION WITH



For more advice on travel insurance and health care abroad visit the Foreign and Commonwealth Office website at [www.fco.gov.uk](http://www.fco.gov.uk) or the Department of Health website at [www.dh.gov.uk](http://www.dh.gov.uk) or contact BiB on (01325) 353888

In the quest for sun and sand, having a healthy holiday rarely crosses travellers' minds. Thousands of us fall ill or are injured abroad but how confident are you that your travel insurance will cover you when disaster strikes? SARAH FRENCH reports

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