

The Northern Echo

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The lifestyle magazine
for the North-East

JUNE 2004

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nE
contents



8



12



6

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is produced by
The Northern Echo/ Newsquest Ltd.,
a Gannett Company,
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- 3 **SHARON GRIFFITHS**
Joining the gym in-crowd
- 4 **SUMMER LIVING**
How to get the perfect holiday body
- 6 **SUMMER LIVING**
How to be a beach babe
- 7 **SIX OF THE BEST**
Garden furniture
- 8 **INTERIORS**
Safe investment with lots of history
- 11 **GARDENING**
Secret garden behind the Post Office
- 12 **FASHION**
Ties to die for
- 14 **ME AND MY WARDROBE**
Charles Hobson
- 15 **McCOURT & MCKAY**
Out on the town
- 16 **NE SHOPPING**
A Yarm adventure
- 18 **GADGET MAN**
What next for the hand-held PC?
- 19 **FOOD**
Currying flavour the authentic way
- 20 **MOTORING**
Going green with the Toyota Prius
- 21 **NE CONNECTIONS**
Pot bellies and pot black
- 22 **COFFEE TIME**
Crossword and puzzles,
PLUS win a year's gym membership at Redworth Hall





sharon griffiths

“Nobody at a gym much cares about what other people look like...”

WHAT sadist decided that gyms should be surrounded by mirrors? Have they no sympathy, no mercy, no simple Christian charity? No wobbly bits? When you are pounding up and down on a treadmill and your face is going redder and redder, your hair is flat, the sweat is trickling down your shiny face and various bits of you seem to be making a joyous bid for freedom, then frankly, the last thing you want to be able to do is actually see yourself.

This is not how it was meant to be. When I first joined a gym at the end of the 80s, our only images of such places were from films and TV series or Jane Fonda videos. So we thought they were full of muscle-bound men in tight vests and bulging thighs, and impossibly slim and beautiful women in clingy, lime green Lycra and designer leg-warmers.

And so for weeks, while my expensive membership ticked away unused, I worried. Not about the initial assessment – in a life full of embarrassments, what’s one more – not even if I’d be able to work the machinery or not fall off the treadmill. No, I worried about what to wear.

And when I finally summoned up the courage to sneak in, breathing in hard, wearing black leggings and one of husband’s old large and long T-shirts in a vain attempt at camouflage, it was to discover that at least half of the women there had adopted exactly the same uniform.

The men, meanwhile, instead of being all bronzed and muscular, mostly wore flapping old football shorts, shapeless T-shirts and – with one or two notable exceptions – seemed to have particularly white and weedy legs under bulging beer bellies.

This was enormously encouraging. But nobody much at a gym cares about what other people look like. Most of them hardly notice. If that man behind you seems to be staring fixedly at your bum, it’s probably just because he’s concentrating *very hard* in order not to collapse breathless and gasping onto the step machine.

It doesn’t matter, because everyone there is totally absorbed with themselves. They’re climbing their own hills, counting their own calories, timing their own circuits. They are there with the sole aim of trying to improve their own bodies and are utterly, blissfully self-absorbed. Unlike swimming pools, where

people can swim and talk at the same time, there are precious few people who have the spare puff to do that in the gym. Occasionally, you might chat to the adjoining treadmill – as when the middle-aged man on the next treadmill to me suddenly said in a strange and strangulated voice: “Good God, according to this machine, I’m dead...” which I felt deserved my attention.

Any real one-upmanship is in the effort people put into using the machines. (Easy to judge while I’m lying languorously back on my lazy bike). Well yes, maybe the man who’s done half an hour fast uphill running, lifted lots of heavy weights and stepped like fury is super fit. On the other hand, he looks so sweaty and exhausted that we can admire him without envy.

We are all there, doing our own thing and feeling modestly pleased with ourselves. All ages, all shapes, all sizes. We might not be breaking records, but at least it’s better for us than sitting at home eating chocolate.

And then it happens... Just when you’re feeling all right about yourself, in comes The Beautiful Couple.

Every gym has these. They are tanned and toned, wearing designer Lycra that reveals every contour of their impossibly perfect bodies. They lope elegantly and confidently through the gym, clutching little bottles of water. They pick adjoining machines, set them to maximum and as they run at great speeds up impossible inclines they laugh and talk to each other. Effortlessly.

After half an hour of this full stretch exercise, they might perhaps go a little bit pink. But no sweaty hair, no purple cheeks, no great wet patches on the backs of their shirts. No raw and strangled breathing.

And as they are gazing, rapt, either at each other or their own reflections, they don’t notice that the rest of us looking sideways at each other, sharing raised eyebrows, wide eyes, shrugged shoulders. We, who an hour ago barely acknowledged each other.

We are all gazing at The Beautiful Couple, hoping they will fall flat on their beautiful faces or drop a weight on their designer-clad toes. I know, I know, not at all nice. But as these thoughts seem to ripple round the gym, the rest of us start smiling a bit, grinning even, as we all know what the others are thinking.

They’re right you know. Exercise really does cheer you up.

NE window shopping

DOWN THE DUCT

IT’S good to know that the Government included housework in recent list of activities that can help to burn off the calories. It almost makes all that dusting and hoovering seem worthwhile. But to make the job a little easier VacuDuct have launched an automated, floor level dustpan to complement its central, in-built vacuum system. VacPan is an inlet flap, hidden away in the skirting board or kickboard of a fitted kitchen. Once the rubbish has been swept to the VacPan door, the device is activated by pushing the flap with the foot. This switches the power



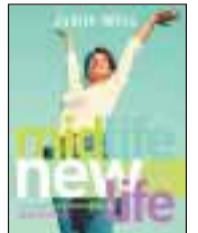
unit on and the debris on the floor is sucked away into a dirt collection bucket. For more information on central vacuum systems, contact VacuDuct on 0800 783 6264 or log onto www.vacuct.co.uk



IF you want to cut out some calories, one of the best – and healthiest – ways to cook is to steam your food. The Haden Food Steamer has two basket layers with side handles and a separate rice bowl, which are removable for easy cleaning. The steamer (model no 10986) costs £14.99. For stockists please call 0845 658 9700.

MID-LIFE BOOST

THERE are more of us in our forties and fifties than ever before, an age when some people begin to feel that the most exciting part of their lives is over. A new book, *Mid Life, New Life* by Judith Wills (Quadrille, £25), aims to counteract these negative feelings, helping the reader to renew their physical and mental energy and enthusiasm for life. It covers everything from whether or not cosmetic surgery is a good idea to reorganising your diet for your age. Nutrition and diet expert Wills suggests different exercise regimes for body shape, energy, joints, weight loss and good skin and offers tips for boosting energy and libido.



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NE beauty

How to get the perfect holiday body

With summer on the way, now is the time to think about getting ready for that holiday. CHRISTEN PEARS looks at ways to prepare

FAKING IT

THE only safe tan is a fake tan. Gone are the days of orange streaks and smelly lotions, the new generation of self-tanners can give you a perfect sunkissed glow. St Tropez is one of the best, either at home or in the salon. Fake Bake, available at Saks, is another top salon treatment, while for those confident enough to go it alone, Clarins Instant Bronze Tanning Gel gives a natural colour.

If you're doing it yourself, make sure you de-fuzz your legs the night before to ensure smooth, even results. Remove dry skin with a body scrub or loofah. Dry areas are much more absorbent so use lotion sparingly on the elbows and knees and remove any excess with a damp tissue. Don't forget to wash your hands immediately afterwards to avoid brown palms. St Tropez makes a handy self-tan remover just in case you do make a mistake.

HOLIDAY HAIR

SUN, sea and sand may be the ingredients for a perfect holiday but they wreak havoc with your hair. Give your hair a head start by using an intensive conditioner once a week as part of your hair care routine.

If you've had your hair coloured in preparation for your trip, make sure you

avoid the sun, sea or swimming pool for 48 hours afterwards. If you plan to do a lot of swimming, use a special swimming shampoo, designed to combat the effects of chlorine.

Like skin, hair burns in the sun so use a special hair sunscreen and a hat – the ultimate protection.

PERFECT PEDICURE

WE often neglect our feet, particularly during the winter months, but no-one can get away with cracked heels and ragged toenails when wearing a pair of summer sandals.

A salon pedicure is a real treat for feet but you can achieve good results at home. Soak your feet in warm water with a few drops of essential oil for five minutes. Peppermint cools, camomile softens and lavender heals. Rub in cuticle remover, wait a minute and then push back with an orange stick. Slough off dead skin with a pumice stone or foot exfoliant. Clean and dry nails before varnishing. Apply a base coat, varnish and then top coat for a lasting finish.

DE-FUZZING

YOU don't want to look like a yeti on the beach, and while shaving may be the tried and trusted method (quick and easy), there are other ways to get rid of hair that



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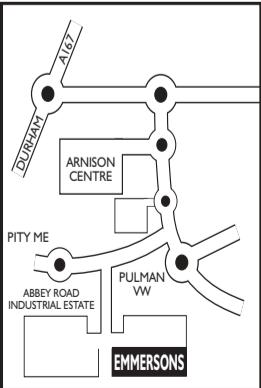
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Skin deep: holidays are great for stress, but hours in the pool or sea do nothing for skin and hair

6 Sun, sea and sand may be the ingredients for the perfect holiday, but they wreak havoc with your hair

offer longer-lasting results that could see you through your hols.
 Depilatory creams are messy and time-consuming but long-lasting. Make sure you do a patch test 24 hours before in case the cream is too strong for your skin. Choose a special cream for bikini lines if you're planning on wearing that new it'sy bitsy number – much kinder on sensitive skin than shaving or waxing.
 Waxing is, however, great for legs, as is sugaring. If you can take the pain, your legs could be hair free for several weeks.
 Electrolysis is the ultimate in hair removal but it's expensive, painful and takes several sessions as only a few hairs can be removed at a time. Perhaps next year...

BODY BEAUTIFUL

SADLY, when it comes to losing weight and toning up, there are no miracle solutions.
 With only a week to go, there's no way you're going to lose that half stone you've been meaning to shift all year. There are, however, some last minute improvements that can be made – and they don't involve starving yourself.
 Drink lots of water. With no calories, it's also brilliant for detoxing the system. Cut out processed and sugary foods and opt instead for lots of fruit and vegetables. Keep portions small – cup of soup instead of a bowl, an appetiser instead of a main course.
 Get active. You don't have to enrol at the gym. Use the stairs instead of the lift, walk to the shops, get off your bus one stop earlier.

TRAVEL TIPS

VERY few people can get off a plane looking stunning after a long flight. Dehydration is a major problem, zapping the moisture out of skin and hair and draining energy levels. Avoid alcohol and caffeine, which have a diuretic effect. Opt instead for water.
 Cover dry, sore eyes with a damp face cloth or piece of muslin. Exercise before you go on a long flight. It improves circulation, increases the body's metabolic rate and boosts energy.
 All of these things will help you combat fatigue and ensure you arrive at your destination looking good and raring to go.



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Once you've toned up ready for that swimsuit or bikini, **CHRISTEN PEARS** finds out how to choose the perfect fit

Splashing out: Jean Walker with the vast array of costumes on offer at Lady J

Pink tie-side bikini bottoms, £9.99; plain and surf reversible pink shorts, £11.99. From Next



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How to be a beach babe

TSY bitsy bikini or 1950s-style swimming costume, complete with control panels? Classic black or bold prints? The choices are endless, but choose the wrong one and you could find yourself afraid to flaunt your figure on the beach. So how do you make the most of your assets?

Jean Walker owns Lady J in Darlington's Post House Wynd, a specialist lingerie shop and one of the region's largest swimwear stockists. With labels including Fantasie, Diva, Christina and Triumph, there is a wide selection of styles to suit every shape and size.

For Jean, a good fit is essential, and women need just as much support from their swimming costume or bikini as their bra. Women with anything above a C cup should be buying according to cup size, not dress size.

Jean says: "A costume should fit like a second skin. Often, if you have a larger bust and you choose a size 10, 12 or 14 to accommodate that, it's too big in the body. "If you notice girls on the beach tugging at their bikini bottoms or swimming costume, it means they've bought the wrong size. They've bought it because of the cup size but it just doesn't fit elsewhere. It's uncomfortable and if you're in the water, it just billows up and looks awful."



Women should be fitted for a swimming costume or bikini in the same way as a bra – and that doesn't just mean measuring. Sizes vary according to make and style so you should always try before you buy. Jean's range goes up to GG in costumes and HH in bikinis.

Strapless styles are always popular, particularly with women looking for a tan without strap-marks. Jean stocks costumes with built-in control panels, which help create a slim figure, as well as softer styles. There are costumes for sunbathers, as well as serious swimmers, and a special mastectomy range by Anita. The swimming costumes contain pockets for women to put their prosthesis in and are cut high at the front.

Jean says: "They're brilliant because they make ladies feel less conspicuous. They're also very pretty and it gives them the confidence to wear a swimming costume again."



Above: lime green halter neck £16, hipster, belted pants £16, M&S; right, navy and coral tankini, £23.98, Next

HOW TO CHOOSE A SWIMMING COSTUME THAT SUITS

LARGE BUST

Underwired and broad straps will give you good support but also try designs which have a wrap-over effect or any kind of diagonal pattern across the bust. Alternatively, try a swimsuit with a dark colour on the bust and lighter below.

SMALL OR NO BUST

Choose underwired cups with padding to make your bust look fuller. Twisted or bandeau-style tops add substance to the bust area, as do ruffles, gathers and horizontal patterns.

SHORT-WAISTED

Steer clear of bikinis, which will only emphasise your short midriff. A one-piece suit with any kind of vertical line or pattern will create the illusion of length. Costumes made from different coloured vertical panels also make your waist look slimmer.

BIG HIPS/TUM/BUM

A one one-piece suit with a tummy control panel will give slimming effect. Draw attention to your upper half with lighter



shades and choose wide-set shoulder straps to balance your proportions. Skirted styles can look good.

FULLER FIGURE

A well-fitting swimming costume is essential. Fuller figures look better in a deep colour and a matt fabric. A medium-cut leg is best, while control panels hold in flabby tummies. Choose vertical or diagonal details, wide straps and a low neckline.



6 OF THE BEST

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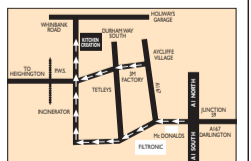


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NE interiors

The developer who has turned one of Darlington's historic properties into luxury homes is banking on buyers falling for its grand proportions and fascinating past. SARAH FRENCH reports



Safe investment

SHOULD the owners of Faverdale House ever need a hiding place for their valuables, there will be no need to stash their cash and jewels under the mattress. Their riches should be as safe as houses deep inside the Victorian property, which comes with its own strongroom.

For security reasons, we won't reveal exactly where in the house the safe can be found, but with its heavy, six-inch metal door, it's a great home for the family silver. The house itself remains hidden from the gaze of drivers heading into Darlington along West Auckland Road. Finding it takes in a winding route across what was once the country estate of Faverdale Hall, now replaced by estates of housing and industry.

The safe offers a clue to the hall's past inhabitants.

With the oldest part of the property dating back to at least 1770, the estate belonged to the Stow Stowell family, yeoman farmers who, according to local historian Chris Lloyd, married into the area's most important families. The estate came to the fore during the mid-19th Century when Darlington's burgeoning railway industry demanded land for tracks.

William, the last of the Stow Stowells, sold the estate in 1897 to Charles Hubert

Backhouse, who was a board member of the famous family-run bank in Darlington and son of Edmund Backhouse, Darlington's first MP in 1868. A keen rider and sportsman, Charles was attracted by the Stow Stowells' reputation for horsemanship and work to improve foxhunting on the estate.

He built the extensive stable block and modernised the old house bestowing the name Faverdale Hall on it and adding two further wings. It made for a rather oddly-shaped single dwelling but it was a gift to the architect charged with turning it into three separate modern homes.

Developers Turney-Wilde have been sympathetic in their restoration of the unlisted property, retaining as many of the original features as possible.

Faverdale House, which was apparently the original name of the property used by the Stow Stowells, has been converted from the west wing of the hall. The grand front door, through which Charles Backhouse would have welcomed his guests, and porch complete with mosaic floor, have been preserved, as have the vast proportions of the wonderful main reception room.

The dramatic entrance, which leads into a grand, 23ft long reception area with high ceilings and stripped wood floors, is the showpiece of the house and lends itself





Clockwise from above: the dream kitchen, designed by Grange Interiors; period details in the house; the Manor House at Faverdale Hall

Pictures: DAVID WOOD

perfectly to open plan entertaining. From here, the original dark wood staircase, believed to be of Austrian origin, sweeps upwards, dividing at the top towards five bedrooms and three bathrooms.

Outside, the gardens to the front of the hall are all that is left of the extensive estate, which once boasted tennis courts, greenhouses, a summer house and rose and vegetable gardens.

The lawns roll down to a stream and border onto woodland.

The oldest part of the original building and the most charming property in the redevelopment is now known as Manor House. Old photographs show it covered in greenery but this has been stripped away, allowing the light to come pouring into the living room where the stunning original cornicing has been retained.

David Cansfield, of Newcastle architects GWK, says investigations revealed steel work in the ceiling, unusual for a domestic property of that era and a further indication of wealth. The windows are now

uPVC but their original shape lent itself well to conversion.

The large kitchen also benefits from a south-facing aspect and is reached from the garden via a beautiful carved stone doorway. Inside it's a dream modern kitchen, designed by Grange Interiors, with granite-topped island and plenty of space for family dining.

There's no grand staircase in this conversion but the concession to the past is a spacious, airy landing off which the four bedrooms and bathroom lead.

Charles's other extension to the main house has been converted into the four-bedroom Stephenson House, which boasts original cellars.

Beyond this are two new properties, a three-bedroom apartment and Saddler's House, a four-bedroom new build constructed on the site of a flat-roofed extension believed to have been added to the property in the 1950s.

Charles Backhouse stayed at Faverdale

▶ **Continued on page 10**



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NE interiors



► Continued from page 9

for just ten years, until his poor health drove him to Devon. He let the estate for £250 a year to Frank Robson, managing director of Sunderland flour millers EC Robson and Sons. In 1913, the hall and, more importantly, 240 acres of land were sold to the North Eastern Railway for £25,000.

Anticipating prosperous times ahead, NER turned the estate, which was bounded on two sides by railways, into a wagon works.

During construction work this year, workmen unearthed a wooden, hand-painted plaque of 1914 informing boys who wished to become apprentices that preference would be given to those who had attended day trade school or evening classes. The plaque now forms part of the display at Darlington Railway Museum, having been donated by Turney-Wylde.

The first wagon to be built on the estate left Faverdale in 1923 with 150,000 more built over the next four decades.

Local people reported recently that during the war when sirens sounded to signal air raids over the wagon works, neighbours would rush to the hall to seek shelter in the cellars.

The hall remained a home until the 1940s when its occupant AC Stamer, NER's assistant chief mechanical engineer, died and it was turned into the All-Line Commercial School, a residential centre for advanced training in railway studies. The hall was adapted to provide dormitory accommodation and leisure facilities.

When the wagon works closed in 1963, the estate was sold to the council for £125,000 – the shops became Faverdale

Industrial Estate and the hall became a training centre. The house and stables were looked after by Faverdale Training and Adventure Ltd, which put the tower to good use for abseiling – more on the tower and stables when we make a return trip to Faverdale in the summer.

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Clockwise from main picture: 1897 – the year the estate was sold to the Backhouse family; original coving in the Manor House; Faverdale Hall, the door and staircase

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Location: Sadberge

Age of garden: 15 years

Three favourite plants: magnolia, delphiniums, any clematis

Tool can't live without: hoe

Maintenance: potters at weekends mainly, gardener in once a week

Worst job: weeding

YOU get a hint that there is something special about Arthur and Meg Saunders' garden by the abundantly billowing flower tubs outside Sadberge Post Office.

These aren't there as part of a village in bloom campaign, but simply because this is where they live and work.

Their garden is reached by opening the door at the back of the popular post office. You are immediately catapulted into the realms of a magical secret garden.

First impressions are of a soft, lush, green oasis. There is hardly a surface left uncovered by vegetation. The walls are clothed in clematis, solanum, honeysuckle and climbing roses. The borders are packed full of showy perennials, and the cleverly-placed trees hold the attention even up to the skyline.

The first major specimen that you come across whilst wandering around Arthur's well tended plot is a large mature magnolia. When he moved in, this was the site of an enormous rambling rose which choked the side and roof of the house. He removed the beast and is now rewarded each spring with a blousy show of goblet-sized blossom.

The small but crystal clear pond that lies at the foot of the magnolia is home to a bucket load of bouncing frogs. They revel in the irises, marsh marigold, astrantia and rushes that surround and hide the pond. This also helps to keep the goldfish out of view from the marauding herons, hence a large and happy population of orange, black and white fish, which seem to swim around in gentle, laid-back manner befitting the mood of the garden. A huge and healthy thicket of delphiniums links the pond to the start of the main borders that edge the garden.

On the opposite side of the lawn is a large, curvaceous raised border. The leap of height really shows off the plants and makes tending to the soil much easier (not quite so far to bend). The centrepiece here is a fragrant white lilac. Its gnarled and twisted trunk and branches snake their way upwards and over the old brick wall into

next door's garden space in a mystical manner. The tree is festooned with bird boxes, feeding stations and nutty treats. Arthur likes to encourage the wildlife into his garden as they help him in his battle with the slugs and greenfly.

Crab apple, pieris, mock orange, hydrangea, broom and garrya all jostle for attention in the raised section, whilst their feet are smothered in aquilegia, forget-me-not, lilies and tiarella. Then all of a sudden you come to a green wall of clipped leylandii. Poke your head around this barrier and you glimpse a ten foot high fig tree, already laden with fruit, scrambling up the wall. Arthur throws a fleece over it in winter just to keep the worst of the frosts at bay.

This is not the only edible produce in the garden. A nearby pear tree is laden with set fruitlets. Look closer though and you will notice that they are not all the same. Some are longer than others, and some are round and squat. This is a triple-fruited pear tree. It is not a natural phenomenon, but a result of grafting three trees together at a very young stage, and it does prove to be a good topic of conversation in the garden.

In the centre of the garden stands a laburnum tree. These got an awful lot of bad press several years ago for being poisonous. Well, yes, the seeds are toxic, but so are those of delphiniums, lupins and peonies, but people still glorify them. It is a matter of being careful to clear away the pods as they fall to the ground.

As the laburnum is quite an open canopied tree, Arthur has created a sedate seating area under his, and once again, hangs his bird feeders and wind chimes from its branches. Just behind this area is another border packed with bursting point with crocosmia, weigelia, cotinus, bleeding heart, lupins and geraniums. An arching yellow rose, probably the canary yellow rose, spurts out from the foliage like a floral fountain.

Arthur gets many of his plants from the 'clearing-out' section of garden centres. Often they come unlabelled, damaged or unhealthy, but he sees this as a challenge. He doesn't like to see any plant being wasted or thrown out.

It is a pleasure to see a garden where all the levels are used, and designed and planted in such a way as to create peace and tranquillity. This must surely be the place that Arthur and Meg escape to for a snatched moment of stillness after the long hours of managing a busy and bustling Post Office.



Arthur Saunders, left, and his wife Meg love to escape to their garden behind the Post Office

Gardening Correspondent BRIGID PRESS visits a stunning secret garden behind a village Post Office

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Winning by a neck



He may be still a student, but John Garner is taking the fashion world by storm with his unusual ties. He tells SARAH FOSTER about how he makes men believe they're David Beckham

THE first thing that strikes me about John Garner is his punctuality. We've arranged to meet at 9am and I'm running a little late but this doesn't worry me - he is, after all, a student, and therefore almost guaranteed not to be on time. My phone rings at a few minutes past. He's at our appointed rendezvous, a café in Durham, and it's shut. I suggest that he comes to The Northern Echo's office, where I've been whiling away the time, and a few minutes later he turns up clutching a leather case. He has the unkempt student look, with longish hair sticking out at all angles and a rough woolly jumper but if enthusiasm is key to business success, he certainly passes muster.

John, 21, a final year economics student at Durham University, hadn't dreamed of setting up a company until he attended a week-long entrepreneurial course last year. He jokes: "I thought there would be a free bar or something." Then adopting the more sober tone that befits a serious businessman, he says: "I had always

wanted to do something myself, even when I was washing cars when I was a little kid. I met a guy called Professor Max Robinson and struck up a really good rapport with him.

"We started talking about various ideas. The first idea was doing made-to-measure suits but the equipment was really expensive so we thought, 'Why not start with a smaller accessory like the men's tie?' I think I was looking for quite a big knotted tie at the time and I couldn't find one. The only things that were remotely different out there were Vivienne Westwood ties."

Last summer, John and his friend Tom Hurley started playing around with designs, which they had made up by a tailor in Durham. It was very much trial and error, and John admits he knew little about running a business, but he managed to persuade his mentor, Prof Robinson, to come on board as a shareholder, along with another professor, Brian Turner, and businessman James Beatty.

"The company started trading on December 8,



2003 and I haven't really had a life since," John cheerfully admits. "We had to do things like accounting, finding a manufacturer, marketing, sales, a website..."

Initially trading exclusively via the Internet, JG Neckwear soon infiltrated local menswear shops Edo, on Newcastle's Clayton Road; Lynx, in Harrogate; Moffat and Affleck, in Darlington; and Henley's Menswear in John's home town of Collingham, near Wetherby. But he has much bigger ideas.

"We have a contact at Harvey Nichols and that's where we want to be in six months. We took the ties out to Marbella at Easter and over to Dublin. The sky's the limit. One of my friends is setting up a meeting with De Beers, the South African diamond people, so we could have a tie with diamond studs."

John certainly talks the talk, but this is seemingly backed up by interest from people like sports presenter Gaby Logan and Newcastle footballer Lee Bowyer. "We gave one to Lee Bowyer and we are in talks with a couple of football agents, who absolutely love the ties. Gaby Logan is taking them down for all the boys she presents with."

According to John, his ties are perfect for anyone wanting to stand out from the crowd. "The ties are designed for lads from 18 to early 30s. If you are a shy person, you wouldn't wear one. You would wear it if you were going to the races or were on TV. We have sold a lot of the black ones to people who want to look a bit different at a formal event like a ball."

He aims to link his ties with the sort of lifestyle men typically aspire to, packaging them in black, Gucci-like boxes and even including a DVD showing men surrounded by glamorous girls and cruising in Aston Martins.

Since starting the business, some of this has started rubbing off on John's own life, with national men's magazines FHM, Loaded, Esquire and GQ showing interest. "When we were in London in the spring, all our meetings were at The Dorchester and we are looking to be groomed into that kind of thing. We are looking for someone to put their arm around us and say, 'This is where you go and this is what you do'."

John recognises that he's just a "daft lad" who



Ties to die for: entrepreneur John Garner

might end up falling flat on his face, but for now, is content to sit back and enjoy the ride. "It's one of those things that could really take off or might not," he says, "but every single day I'm learning something more than they could ever teach at university."

● John's ties, priced at £65, can be bought from www.jgneckwear.com

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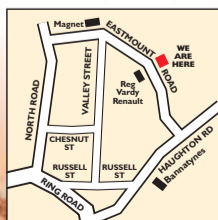
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me and my wardrobe



Charles Hobson runs a gentlemen's outfitters in Easingwold. He set up Charles Hobson 27 years ago, a shop he describes as like a 'private version of Austin Reed'

How would you describe your look?

Someone described me as dapper the other day but I wouldn't quite describe it like that. I would say I was smart and unfussy.

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

I think it was £800 on a cashmere overcoat last autumn. It's lovely to wear. It feels gorgeous – just like wearing a sweater.

What's your worst buy?

A pair of jeans. I'd never worn jeans before but I was inveigled to buy a pair and they're horrible. They're too hot in summer and too cold in winter and they don't give. That's my first and last pair.

What's your favourite item of clothing?

The two-piece suit. It's great because you can dress it up or down. They look good with an open-neck shirt or a shirt and tie. I wear suits a lot for work and it's great because you don't have to worry about matching up. The cloths and the fit are so comfortable these days.

What's your favourite shop?

It has to be my own. I don't really need to shop anywhere else because what I sell is what I wear myself.

Which celebrity's style do you admire and why?

Michael Aspel. He's always very smartly turned out and looks good even when he's in more casual clothes. I think men's clothes are getting a lot better. They're less constructed and a 50-year-old isn't dressed like a 50-year-old would have dressed ten years ago.



Outfits clockwise from top: grey suit, The Label; cream jacket, Treck and Travel; trousers, Meyer; jacket, Odermark; trousers, Meyer; tie, Mirto

Jeans... are horrible. They're too hot in summer and too cold in winter and they don't give

NE out on the town

McCourt & McKay



The North-East's answer to Trinnie and Susannah take to the bars and clubs of the region in search of style and individuality

After reading about Durham in last month's NE magazine, especially the bit about it being 'heaven for Sex And The City wannabes' we thought we would have a night out there - perfect! We had heard that Jimmy Allen's, below Van Mildert, and Chase were the stylish bars in town. As it was a warm evening, we chose Chase Bar, which is situated on the banks of the river Wear, with spacious terraces to admire the view of this beautiful city. Chase Bar has only been open since March and is set on two floors, with terraces on each. The decor is very modern and is complemented by soft leather sofas and warm lighting. Manageress Helen informed me that they have DJs seven nights a week. On a weekend, it is mainly R&B followed by house and dance music. Midweek, cool grooves reflect a more chilled out atmosphere. I have to confess that we went on a Sunday but, due to camera problems, went back on the Tuesday to take pictures. On both occasions, we were not hard pushed to find stylish, as well as very friendly, people.

waitress. You can see that Danielle is a girl who doesn't have to make an effort to look good, although she informed us that she believes in eating healthily, drinking lots of water, exercising and, most importantly, enjoying yourself. Her top was by Killah from Fenwick's, trousers by Miss Sixty and shoes from Shelly's. We thought the colours she wore looked fresh and pretty, the style relaxed yet feminine and classic. Danielle generally shops in Newcastle but prefers to shop in London whenever she can.



DANIELLE SIMON

Tony Murphy, 19, is a postman and, we have to say, a very cool looking one at that. Chase Bar is ideal for him, as he lives near and likes it as well. He wore a mix of labels that worked so well and at ease together. His hat is by Vivienne Westwood, the vest from Top Shop under a jacket from a charity shop. His trousers were by Duffer St George and shoes from Soled Out. Tony's favourite shops are Gate Menswear, in Sunderland, and Blue Rinse, in Leeds. Tony recommends shaving after a sauna, which he visits once a week. He also goes to the gym once a week and runs four times a week.

Ifran Parvez is 22 and is currently studying politics. It became apparent that he also has a natural flair and passion for fashion design, and he told me about some very cool designs he had in mind - watch this space. Ifran had a lively, yet easy personality, which was reflected in the way he dressed - casually yet confidently. He also believes in wearing what you look and feel good in, not what is in fashion. He wears an Adidas vintage top, Carhart Jeans, Converse All Stars baseball boots, and a one-off necklace from Kaleidoscope in London. He is quite adventurous in where he likes to shop but usually finds he can get what he wants in London - Burro, Billionaire Boys Club, Bathing Ape and Paul Smith are some of his favourites. Oh, and he also gave me permission to put his number in if any of you single girls would be interested in sharing design ideas! 07779595935.

● Judie McCourt is a presenter on Century FM and has worked in TV. Allison McKay has worked on fashion and celebrity glossy magazines as a hair and make-up artist. Together, they run AM Creative Productions, specializing in creative event management and the production of photographic images for advertising

www.amcreativeproductions.com



TONY MURPHY



IFRAN PARVEZ



PHIL CHAN

I LOVE to see a man being adventurous with clothing and colour, so seeing Phil Chan was a breath of fresh air. Phil, 21, is currently studying law and said he came to Durham after having enough of London and loves it here. He is definitely a hit with us. Phil believes in mixing colours and that if it feels right, you should wear it, but most importantly, that you should always wear things for yourself, not other people. Phil looked great in a casual shirt, colourful scarf and trendy shoes all from Paul Smith, with a pair of Verri jeans. Whenever Phil is in Hong Kong, he likes to shop in Seibu.



These two lovely ladies are Lucy Hastings, 21, and Louise Hughes, 26, who both work at John Willets Fireplaces as sales executives. They like Chase Bar because of its friendly atmosphere and music. Lucy and Louise agreed that it was better to go for good quality and therefore more expensive skin care and make-up ranges rather than spending all their

money on expensive designer labels. Their reasoning was that you can get good quality, affordable fashion looks from high street stores and renew the look next season, whereas you can't buy a new skin. We like that. They particularly like Chanel foundations and products from Lancôme and Clinique because they last longer and are kind to the skin. Lucy had the loveliest, totally natural, hair colour. She was wearing a skirt and shoes from River Island and a Jane Norman top, with a bag from Etam. Louise is a bit of a Karen Millen fan, which is where her trousers were from. Her top was from Top Shop, her shoes from Barratts and a lovely pink bag by D&G.

Danielle Simon, 20, is a student in fine art and photography and also a part-time

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NE shopping

YARM



Prom queens walk this way...

SARAH FOSTER visits the High Street in Yarm and finds it brimming with old-fashioned charm

WHEN you think of many modern high streets, it can be hard to distinguish one from another. The usual chain stores vie for space between takeaways and charity shops, and the buildings are often grey and soulless. Nothing could be further from the appearance of Yarm's main shopping street.

One of the widest in England, it retains its cobbles and quaint Georgian houses, along with its historic focal point – the Town Hall dating back to 1710. Everywhere you look, the past has left its imprint and on closer inspection of the imposing municipal headquarters, you can even see marks recording the levels of ancient river floods.

While the High Street is very much a commercial centre, packed with all the shops and local amenities you'd expect, there are very few chain stores. Instead, you'll find a plethora of individual and family businesses exuding their own unique personalities.

Some, like Cartmell Electrics, have been around for many years and retain the old-fashioned look of local shops dedicated to serving their community. Others, notably the many exclusive clothes shops, bring a youthful vibrancy which acts as a perfect balance.

The House fashion and lifestyle store and sister shop, &Eve designer shoes, have long been favourites with the discerning shopper, but Yarm's newest fashion store is The Conservatory, run by Julian and Rhona Blades, the team behind Jesmond's successful Jules B shop. Designed to emulate the light and airy feel of a real conservatory, it stocks a wide range of top designers including Shirin Guild, Sand, Joseph and Osaka.

Right next door is Tru womenswear – one of those shops whose colour and vitality just draw you in. Inside it's a real girls' world; a pink palace brimming with flowers and sequins. The decor and stock reflect the girly tastes of owner Dani Richardson, who imports much of her clothing and accessories from Paris and Spain, meaning that they are unlikely to be found elsewhere in the region. Apparently, the store is a big hit with girls

looking for all-important prom dresses, and accessories such as ice cream motif purses and clothesline-strewn bags are designed to appeal to the little girl in every woman.

At the top of the street is Individuals art and craft shop, which has been trading for about four years. Owner Suzanne Murray has just acquired the upstairs space and the building is fast becoming a hive of creative activity, with the craft materials shop Crafty Individuals, Montage Gallery, and art studio Room at the Top having recently opened. Suzanne has already started running classes on things like ceramic painting and card making and would like to run more. She says: "The classes have just started in February and we are gradually building up what we offer. I am looking for craftspeople to offer tuition and exhibit their work."

One of the newest shops is Cameo, a home interiors store which promises "affordable splendour". It stocks individual pieces with a French flavour – mirrors, cushions, candles, garden furniture – "home accessories from £2 to £2,000," says owner Sue Harriman, who has two other stores in Stokesley and Norton.

There is no shortage of eating places on the High Street, and whether it's a quick sandwich and a coffee or a more substantial meal you're after, there's sure to be somewhere to fit the bill. In keeping with the street's character, every café and restaurant has its own style and there's an impressive range of British and international cuisine.

Places like The Brasserie Restaurant and Chadwick's continental café offer sophisticated fare – twice baked Roquefort cheese soufflé and smoked duck, blackberry and mini mushroom omelette are typical starters at the Brasserie. Alternatively, there are informal cafés, old-fashioned pubs and restaurants specialising in foods from specific countries.

The street's newest restaurant is Y-Thai, which was opened last month by Paul Eastwood and Harry Beadnell following the success of their Stokesley branch. Another recent development has been a name change for the former Balti House



LIFE COACH

CREATIVITY – EXPRESS YOURSELF



It never ceases to amaze me how many people don't think they are creative. Somehow we have a perception that unless we can paint like Picasso or compose like Mozart, we are lacking in creative skills.

Think of preparing a meal, tending a garden, making someone laugh. All take energy and all have something to show for the energy put in.

Expression is vital if we are to maintain a healthy outlook on life. We are a bit like mini laboratories. Things happen to us in life, they make an impression and we can choose how to express what we feel as a result.

There are so many ways we can choose to express how we feel about our lives. But the key is to make a healthy choice.

Bottling things up does not help – it only leads to depression. Continual ranting doesn't help, neither does losing yourself in addiction, be it chocolate, alcohol or work. Think carefully about how you express yourself in life. You never know, you might even discover you really want to take up painting after all and who knows where it might lead?

Juliette Lee

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Clockwise from top left: Yarm High Street – one of the widest in England; Freddie James of the Conservatory; The Brasserie Restaurant and Tru womenswear

restaurant (now the Raj Bari), although customers will be pleased to note that everything else remains the same.

With its charming side streets, or wynds, crammed with even more shops, there's certainly more to Yarm's main street than most, which those seeking something a little bit different are sure to discover.



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gadget man



The right direction for hand-held PCs

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

Will satellite navigation prove the salvation for hand-held PCs?

PERSONAL Digital Assistants, or PDAs to use Geek-speak, have come a long way since they were said to replace a bundle of Filofax papers. Today's models pack the kind of processing power that wouldn't have disgraced a desk top machine a couple of years ago. To date, manufacturers haven't succeeded in utilising all that processing punch for anything more useful than video playback and MP3 decoding. An ability to watch The Matrix on a hand-held may impress the heck out of your pals at the pub but it doesn't really enhance your productivity at all. And with smartphones like the Sony P900 getting closer and closer to the diary features offered by PDAs, it seems as though hand-helds are still great technology looking for a killer application. Many believe that must-have facility may be satellite navigation, also known as GPS (global positioning by satellite). Kitted out with a GPS programme and receiver, your PDA becomes an invaluable aid on long car trips. Not only can it direct you to your destination but also suggest stopping off places if you're on holiday or warn you if there are speed cameras in the area. Even better, although PDA GPS is designed to be used in a car, it doesn't have to be permanently fixed to your motor. If you change car, it's a simple matter to remove the PDA and fit it in your new purchase. I tried the Medion Pocket PC GPS system that's on sale at Halfords and it worked a treat. Installation is a breeze, the PPC comes with a memory card preloaded with maps of Britain and Ireland, plus extra maps of key European countries on CD. Just plug in the Medion PPC and the small GPS

receiver, turn everything on and you're away. The screen displays a map with direction arrows and the speaker gives directions to your destination. It works too. Despite every attempt to fox it (changing destinations mid-route, deliberately driving the wrong way, etc) the Medion GPS system was up to the job, smoothly re-calculating a way out if I blundered the wrong way. When the Medion is out of the car, it reverts to the traditional role of a Pocket PC. You can use it to edit Word documents or manipulate Excel spreadsheets, play music with it or record your thoughts onto the comfortable 64MB of internal memory. It's small and slim by PPC standards (about half the depth of my Compaq Ipaq 3970) and you get a little slipcase to carry it in your jacket pocket. Halfords is currently selling the system for £399 - not unreasonable when you price up a true in-car system - but discount supermarket chain Aldi had the same kit for a remarkable £269 last month. So next time you are doing the family shop it may be worthwhile sneaking an extra long glance beneath the cabbages. Although the Medion bundle isn't particularly onerous to set up there are even neater solutions. You can buy a GPS jacket for the Ipaq range (although an early example I tried a couple of years ago had an annoying tendency to lose touch with the guiding satellites) and some manufacturers have neatly combined a GPS receiver in a PPC (or Palm PC) chassis. Of course, it won't be long before the best smartphones can do GPS but their smaller screens and weedier speakers still put them at a disadvantage. Will satellite navigation prove the salvation for hand-held PCs? Until the price falls to Aldi levels all round, the jury is still out. One thing is for sure, I haven't any excuse for arriving home late any more.





Currying flavour... Rafi Fernandez has just opened her first Northern outpost

It's hot stuff... and getting hotter

A new shop in York is perfect for those who like their curries to have an authentic flavour

CURRY lovers in the South have been enjoying Rafi's spices for 15 years. Now it's our turn to try out these authentic spice mixes with the opening of a new outlet in York. Rafi's Spice Box offers a huge array of authentic Indian ingredients, and if you're not sure what to do with them, there's expert advice on hand too.

Rafi Fernandez, an accomplished cookery author and teacher, whose family come from Hyderabad in Southern India, opened the original Spice Box in 1988. Her two sons manage the new shop, which offers all the ingredients needed to create an authentic Indian meal at home.

As well as well as a wide range of loose whole spices, there are essential ingredients that it's tricky to find anywhere else in York, such as curry leaves, tamarind and ghee.

There are home-made snacks – Bombay mix, vegetable samosas and onion bhajis – and more than a hundred authentic pickles and chutneys from India, Sri Lanka and Pakistan. All the traditional accompaniments are available – pappadums, rice and hand-made naan, and an assortment of home-made Indian sweets and desserts, including the classics such as Gulab Jamun and Ras Malai.

There's an all-in-one curry pack to help novices create an authentic curry at home. You can choose from 27 regional varieties and the spices, garlic, chillies and onions are carefully prepared to your taste while you wait. All you need to do is to simmer the mixture with some water for five minutes and then add meat, fish or vegetables and cook. Each pack costs £3.85 and contains enough ingredients to serve between four and six people.

Rafi developed the idea of the curry pack some 12 years ago in response to requests from customers who wanted to cook curries at home without having to spend hours in the kitchen or trying to buy and then store 30 different spices to keep them fresh.

The packs have proved so popular that the website now receives orders from all over the world on a daily basis, ironically, in a coals-to-Newcastle kind of way, even from India.

● For further details please contact Kevin Fernandez at the shop on 01904 638119 or email to kevin@spicebox.co.uk or visit the website at www.spicebox.co.uk. Rafi Spice Box, 17 Goodramgate, York, YO1 7LW, Monday to Saturday, 9am-5.30pm.



EATING OUT

TRENCHERS, WHITBY

ANY evening of the week, any time after 5pm, two queues begin to snake their way down the harbourside streets of the North Yorkshire seaside town of Whitby. One winds its way down steep steps from the world famous Magpie Cafe, the other emerges from the doors of Trenchers.

Both are hugely popular fish and chip restaurants, but I recommend joining the latter queue. Firstly, it moves faster into the pristine 150-seater restaurant; secondly, when you get seated, there's a lot more elbow room; thirdly, the quick, friendly and attentive service would be nigh on impossible to beat; fourthly, the fish and chips are superb, the cod thick and cooked just-so, the batter light and crispy.

The restaurant underwent a complete refurbishment in 1999 after a fire gutted the premises. Owner Terry Foster, at first devastated by the blaze, then saw it as an opportunity to put into place some of the changes he'd been mulling over. And what it lacks in character, Trenchers makes up for in spotlessness – the marble-topped tables positively gleam – and practicality. The loos are palatial, with hand creams, after shave and lots of other little luxuries.

The menu offers the usual varieties of freshly caught fish, mostly from Whitby, and chips, but whereas many a "chippie" can leave you feeling over-faced (as we say in Yorkshire), by the giant proportions, Trenchers offers a "small" haddock and chips (£6.55), perfectly proportioned for those with less than giant appetites. The children's menu offers smaller portions still with the usual burgers and nuggets for those who don't yet appreciate the delights of fish so fresh it's barely stopped flapping. Variations on the main menu include a fish pie (£8.45) with salmon, prawns, cod, leeks and cheesy potato topping, which friends assure me is delicious, and lobster salad (priced by weight).

Sweets, mostly home-made, include the usual sticky toffee pudding, chocolate fudge cake and mousse (from £4.45).

The restaurant is licensed and open seven days a week, 11am to 8.30pm, 11am to 9pm Saturdays. The hard-working team shut up shop for three months in the winter.

● New Quay Road, opposite the tourist information office and the station, Whitby. (01947) 603212

Jenny Needham

THE Northern Echo has launched a new food website, featuring a restaurant/cafe directory and restaurant and pub reviews. It includes news, features, recipes, including kids' recipes, and a vegetarian section. For a tasty treat, log on to www.northeastfood.co.uk



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NE motoring



The Toyota Prius with its futuristic dashboard, below

The future's here, the future's green

Car pollution is being blamed for contributing to global warming. But as IAN LAMMING discovers, not all vehicles damage the environment

THE dawn chorus gently raises sleepers from their slumbers. Gentle tweeting heralds the start of a new day. It's an idyllic scene for those blessed with village living and one to be preserved. The same can't be said in town, of course, where at all times of the day and night there is the thrumming back noise of traffic.

In our car-mad world the human race is in danger of having its legs replaced by wheels, while the pollution cars cause eats away at the earth's protective layer, the only thing between flesh and the sun's damaging rays.

It's everyone's problem, it is no one's problem; to most people, it is tomorrow's problem, even though the weather is already a victim of change. Go out in the sun even as early as April nowadays and your skin crackles like pork at the kiss of the sun's rays.

Car manufacturers have been thinking about the issue for some time. Japanese manufacturer Toyota claims to have been investigating the problem for the past 40 years and has come up with a partial solution which meets the approval of the travel-conscious.

The Prius is ahead of its time. In fact, that's exactly what the word means in Latin. It is the first piece of practical, sustainable transport to be available commercially and is being hailed the most advanced car on the road.

To the eye, it is a very futuristic-looking vehicle with the lowest drag figure of any car - just 0.26Cd. It is sleek and aerodynamic. It has the biggest indicators of any car I have ever seen and a split glass tailgate, making it all very 21st Century.

The interior is the same. A centrally-mounted screen dominates the dashboard and is reminiscent of something you would see in Thunderbirds. Touch screen functions are backed by voice activation for climate control, satellite navigation and phone.

But it's the Hybrid Synergy Drive which is the most revolutionary part of the Prius. The car is powered by two motors; one is a super efficient 75bhp 1.5 litre petrol; the

second a powerful electric which pumps out of whopping 400Nm of torque from 0-1,200rpm.

Slip inside the cockpit, press a button on the dash and the only thing that happens is that the word 'ready' appears from nowhere. Move the dash-mounted lever to R and still nothing happens. Press the accelerator and eerily the car starts to reverse. Engage drive and it moves forward with equal hush. It's only if you need lots of power or reach a certain speed that the petrol engine actually kicks in.

Then it's a case of engine charges batteries, batteries help engine and even the kinetic energy of braking is collected to charge the power cells. What is doing what when is displayed on the 7in screen in glorious Technicolor.

The result is a car with the power of a 2.0 litre diesel but the lowest vehicle emissions of any on the road. Economy-wise it will happily return 65mpg and even approaches 60mpg in town, where conventional engines eat most petrol.

This superb performance is packaged in a very, comfortable car which drives well, handles brilliantly and is supremely practical thanks to acres of interior space and a big boot.

The car has found favour with North Yorkshire County Council's Travel Awareness officer Geoff Gardner who has had it on test and has been trying to persuade local employers to consider the Prius. He is charged with trying to find solutions to the county's traffic/pollution problems and sees the Prius as a step along the right road.

'It is an impressive car to drive, particularly in town when the electric motor is most active,' he says. 'Fuel and emission figures are good too, though I couldn't get anywhere near the claimed fuel consumption figures. It has to be a step in the right direction.'



NE connections

Pot bellies and pot black



CHRISTINE FIELDHOUSE finds herself in a foodie heaven in North Yorkshire, and wishes she'd packed a larger stomach

NOT a lot of people know this, but Michael Caine has dined on our doorstep, and he described it as "brilliant". It was while he was filming Little Voice in Scarborough that he sampled The Star Inn at Harome. Novelist and playwright JB Priestley also dined there.

It was worrying that celebrities had discovered the inn near Helmsley, North Yorkshire, but none of our friends, even those who pop down the road to the Crab and Lobster at Asenby when they've forgotten to go to Safeway, had even heard of it. But if it was good enough for Michael, the time had come to investigate.

I had expected a place where I would need to mind my ps and qs. Short of time to buy the new wardrobe, I wondered if I should at least get some new luggage to go there. Our three-year-old son was shipped off to his grandparents. We couldn't unleash him on such grandeur.

But The Star Inn was as friendly as it is unpretentious. Tucked away just off the A170, it's a haven of luxury, with every creature comfort catered for. The Star Inn has been owned by husband and wife team Andrew and Jacquie Pern since 1996. While Andrew does the cooking, Jacquie is in charge of front of house. There's even a deli corner shop to buy all the goodies to take home.

The Michelin-Star restaurant is located in the 14th century thatched inn, while accommodation is at Cross House Lodge, across the road. We arrived early on Sunday afternoon, too early for our room, so we left our bags in the gun room while we went walking.

On our return, we had a mini-tour of the accommodation and it all became obvious. We had died and gone to bon viveur heaven.

Downstairs at Cross House is a serve-yourself mini bar. A smell of bacon and other cooked breakfast delights wafted through the air – it was clear that late risers had been well looked after – a good sign for new arrivals. There's nothing more sobering when you are looking forward to a night of overindulging than being told you have to be up by 7am for breakfast.

My first impression of our room was the sheer size of it. The king-sized bed looked like something from a doll's house. There, in front of our bed, was a table, snooker or pool, the jury's still out. My husband Ian, whose qualifications include a lifetime of watching Sky Sports, says pool. The Star Inn brochure says snooker.

Everything in the room screamed: "Enjoy!" from the tea tray which boasted treats from drumstick lollies to Double Decker chocolate bars, to the bathroom which provided Molton Brown toiletries and a bath deep enough to please my husband. Even the books – I Don't Know How She Does It, mum-lit by Allison Pearson and a cocktail book – seemed to tell us it was okay to have fun. DVDs included Moulin Rouge and Never Say Never Again.

And so to dinner. We'd been given the choice of dining in the restaurant or the bar. Both have the same menu. We chose the bar for its cosiness and camaraderie. We were dining early – last orders on Sunday are at 6pm.

"Yorkshire with a twist" is how Andrew Pern describes his cooking, but glancing at the menu, it wasn't the same Yorkshire I was from. Starters included grilled black pudding with pan-fried foie gras, apple and vanilla chutney, and a risotto of fresh horseradish with a saute of wild mushrooms, wilted baby spinach and crackling.

I went for soused Hartlepool halibut with pickled onions and pink peppercorns, dill and potato salad with toasted soda bread – which arrived in an artistic design bearing no resemblance to the description and tasting absolutely perfect. Ian had mussels cooked in bacon and beer.

For my main course, I had delicious duck sausages with Ticklemore Cheese and wild rocket salad, green lentil and smoked bacon dressing, while Ian opted for Gloucester Old Spot pork stew with apples and onions, sage dumplings, and boudin noir, which he said has changed his view of pork.

We are not a couple to be beaten by food, but The Star Inn had the better of the pair of us. We tried standing by the bar to make room for pudding. We walked around a little, admiring the artefacts on the walls, but we still couldn't eat another morsel. We can only say the dark chocolate and kirsch tart with boozy cherries and black forest ice cream and the caramelised fresh lemon tart with a sauce of raspberries looked exquisite.

And so, the pair who had sauntered to the bar earlier waddled off to the bedroom, not for romance in lavish surroundings, as you might imagine, but for a game of pool/snooker. That night, as the moonlight shone through our window, I learnt to chalk my cue and pot a few balls. It was only a few hours to a lavish Star Inn breakfast and I needed the exercise.

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We tried standing by the bar to make room for pudding, we walked around a little

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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.

SERGEANT						LEAGUE
ANNUAL						TAX
HOLY						TIME
NEW						PIG
SITTING						POLLY
AIRY						CAKE
ELBOW						PAINT
SEVENTH						KNOWS
CRIMINAL						PLAYER
WEeping						PATTERN
LIGHT						BLADE
DAISY						MAIL



Name the star pictured on the left ?

ANSWERS
Celebrity wordmatch: Major, Income, Father, Guinea, Pretty, Fairy, Grease, Heaven, Record, Willow, Switch, Chain and the hidden celebrity is John Travolta
Celebrity: Katie Price (Jordan)

WORD wise

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

LAPIDARIST

- A Gem-cutter
- B Student of the Lapp race
- C Surgeon

ANSWER

A: Gem-cutter

IMPOSSIBLE PUZZLE

John had seven children whose ages were spaced evenly, 2 years apart. If the eldest is five times as old as the youngest, how old is the 'middle' child?

SOLUTION

Middle child 9 years old.

NE competition

WIN a year's membership at Redworth's Bodysense club

corner

ONE of County Durham's best known hotels, the four star Redworth Hall, near Newton Aycliffe, is offering one lucky reader of NE Magazine the chance to win a year's membership of the Bodysense Health and Leisure Club, together with a dinner to celebrate the win in the hotel's 1744 restaurant with a partner or friend.

The Jacobean-style building, dating from 1744, is set in 25 acres of woodlands. It retains many of its original features, including an ornate staircase and has 100 en-suite bedrooms. The Bodysense Health and Leisure Club boasts a 13m swimming pool, technogym fitness suite, poolside sauna, steam room, spa pool, hair and beauty salons.

Bodysense has a private membership base but is perfect for special spa days for a gift or personal rejuvenation where the day can be as energetic or as relaxing as you like.

Members can track and view their progress in the gym to get the best out of their exercise time, or, for those who prefer to relax, the poolside offers the perfect area to revitalise a tired body or be reinvigorated after a workout.

The hair salon has an excellent team of friendly stylists and the emmanais beauty salon offers the full range of treatments. With all of its excellent facilities together

under one roof, Bodysense makes a great retreat.

The hotel offers members of Bodysense a range of benefits and discounts, including a 20 per cent discount in the award winning restaurants.

To stand a chance of winning gym membership and a meal for two, simply answer the question below and send the voucher, together with your name, address and telephone number, to NE Magazine/Bodysense Competition, Redworth Hall Hotel, Redworth, Newton Aycliffe, Co Durham DI5 6NL. The closing date is the end of the month and usual newspaper competition rules apply.

How many en-suite bedrooms are there at Redworth Hall?



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