

The Northern Echo

# ne

The lifestyle magazine  
for the North-East

JULY 2005



**FASHION**  
A sparkling  
vocation

**OUTDOORS**  
The wonder  
of wood

**LEISURE**  
Haunts for  
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DL1 1NF  
(01325)  
381313

**ADVERTISING**  
Neil Simpson  
(01325) 505 173  
[neil.simpson@nne.co.uk](mailto:neil.simpson@nne.co.uk)  
Chris Kay  
(0191) 374 0298  
[chris.kay@nne.co.uk](mailto:chris.kay@nne.co.uk)

**EDITORIAL**  
Jenny Needham  
(01325) 505082  
[jenny.needham@nne.co.uk](mailto:jenny.needham@nne.co.uk)

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## sharon griffiths

**For a lot of people, the garden is an extra room in the house. For my sister, it's another house**

**M**Y sister is the only person I know who can get sunburnt doing the ironing. It's all to do with her passion for her garden. Always keen gardeners, since she and her husband retired ten years ago, they have almost lived in their garden. Literally.

Their house is nice enough but pretty average, and was chosen primarily for its enormous garden, which gives them both great joy and satisfaction as well as a lot of fun. There was a time when they would be happily out working there at 6am – for the sheer delight in doing it.

And it paid off. It is a wonderful garden and has been open to the public, featured on calendars, hosted WI garden parties.

But now they have let their standards slip a smidgeon. They still love being outside but now they have time to relax and enjoy it more. And they do.

For a lot of people, the garden is an extra room in their house. For my sister it's another house.

Her outside kitchen is a little bay outside the backdoor that gets the sun for the first few hours of the day. This is a very functional corner, featuring an old formica table that I'm sure I remember 40 years ago in our parents' house. Now it serves when she's preparing vegetables. The outside tap is there too, very handy. So she sits in the morning sun, peeling, scraping, chopping. It's where my brother-in-law is banished to – whatever the weather – when he's making his annual batch of brilliant pickled onions.

And it's great when the grandchildren want to do really messy painting, or make those plaster cast models.

Moving along, following the path of the sun, is the main patio, really a sort of kitchen diner. This has the posh table and chairs, a big brick-built barbecue. This is where they take elevenses, with newspapers spread out on the table. At the bottom of the steps is her herb garden so all sorts of interesting smells drift up over the stones. On a really hot day, you can close your eyes and imagine you're in the south of France or Italy, rather than suburban Oxfordshire.

When she's barbecuing, she can just reach down for the herbs to throw on the meat or put in the dressing.

And this is where she does the ironing, with the flex extending out through the French windows from the indoor sitting room. At the top of the wall at the end of the patio there are even bricks with holes in – so handy for hanging the coat hangers full of shirts. They air nicely in the sun too. She is surrounded by the scents and colours of the garden – so much nicer to look at than the kitchen cupboards, which is what she sees when she irons indoors.

In the summer, out in the middle of the lawn and ideally placed for the full summer sun, they have a swing. Not so much a sitting room, more a lying back taking things easy sort of place.

This is the place to sit in the afternoon, with a novel, or a play on the radio and drift gently with the smell from the rosebeds.

From here you can see sideways down into the enormous vegetable patch. In the middle of that is a functional wooden bench made from old railway sleepers. This is strictly for quick tea breaks in the middle of digging or weeding. There are two greenhouses. One has an ancient wooden armchair and sometimes my brother-in-law retreats in here to the peace and quiet and smell of tomatoes. He calls it his study.

And finally, there is a bench and small table under the lilac tree. This gets the late afternoon and evening sun. This is the lounge bar, where we have large gins or cold beers at the end of the day, whether or not we've done any work in the garden. Sometimes, if we're lucky in late June and early July, we might move over to the barbecue and then back to the lilac tree and still be there at ten o'clock at night, in the last of the high summer sun. Bliss.

Maybe it's because both my sister and brother-in-law were brought up on small farms where it was vital to make the most of the daylight and good weather, but the habit of being outside as much as possible has never left them.

My niece and nephew, who mean awfully well, are trying to persuade their parents to move to a smaller house, with a smaller garden that would be less work. They haven't realised that if my sister had a smaller garden, she'd have to have a much bigger house to make up for it.

And in any case, doing the ironing indoors just isn't the same.

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NE window shopping



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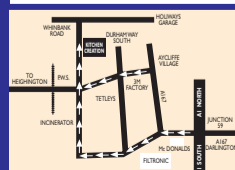
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Fancy somewhere to sit out this summer and watch your garden grow. Decking is the perfect practical answer, says PATRICIA ALLEN



Here decking is combined with steel strips, to give it a more modern look, and stepping stones planted with thyme

# The wonder of wood

**T**HERE'S a place for wood in most gardens, from the traditional and old fashioned, to the modern and sleek, and retailers have on offer pretty much everything your heart could desire when it comes to this versatile material.

So whether you want an artistic sculpture as a centrepiece, or simply some fencing to create a boundary and keep things neat and tidy, there are plenty of things on the market that will fit the bill.

For an attractive, decorative finish to pathways and borders, why not choose some timber edging? Not only does it look great, it also serves the practical purpose of stopping path edges from breaking up or sinking.

Garden decking became very popular a few years back and is now enjoying something of a revival, thanks in part to popular TV gardeners beginning to include it in their designs once again.

The beauty of decking is that it looks clean and modern, while at the same time adding warmth and a natural feel to the garden. Decks can be any size you like, making them equally suitable for large family gardens as small urban ones and tiny terraced yards.

On top of this, they can be built pretty much anywhere you choose, for play or relaxation, on level or sloping ground and on one or more levels.

As such, just like a patio they make perfect seating areas. And where soft, uneven and soggy lawn is often less than ideal for this purpose, decking provides a firm base for furniture – and walking over.

When you choose the location take into

account what you want to achieve in terms of function and interest, bearing in mind which areas are suntraps and which are more shady.

If you still want to use stone or slabs for your patio in some way but love the idea of using wood as well, there's no harm in combining the two materials for an interesting and unique result.

Pergolas are another way to liven up your garden using timber. Once the climbing plants have established themselves and grown all the way up the sides and over the top, you'll have a beautiful natural focal point that frames the garden with an arch and invites guests to go for a wander and take a closer look.

Everything you need for decking and pergolas can be purchased from large DIY stores or timber merchants and there are even kits available for those of you unsure of exactly what you need.

You can choose between softwood – which comes pre-treated for resistance to rot and insect attack – and hardwood, which has a natural durability and is already resistant to rotting and fungal attack.

Deck boards do not require treating, although using a seal on them will enhance the appearance of the wood and reduce weathering. A wood stain will add a little something extra to decks, handrails and posts, and there are a range of different effects and colours to choose from.

For those who'd rather keep wood its natural colour, a clear decking seal is ideal, together with a decking cleaner to remove any growth, moss or algae from the boards.



**ABOVE:** Extensive planting in this pergola room gives it a jungly feel  
**RIGHT:** A gravel path with granite setts leads the eye to the steps and up onto the decking

If you choose not to stain or seal the decking at all, you should treat it at least every three years with a clear preservative.

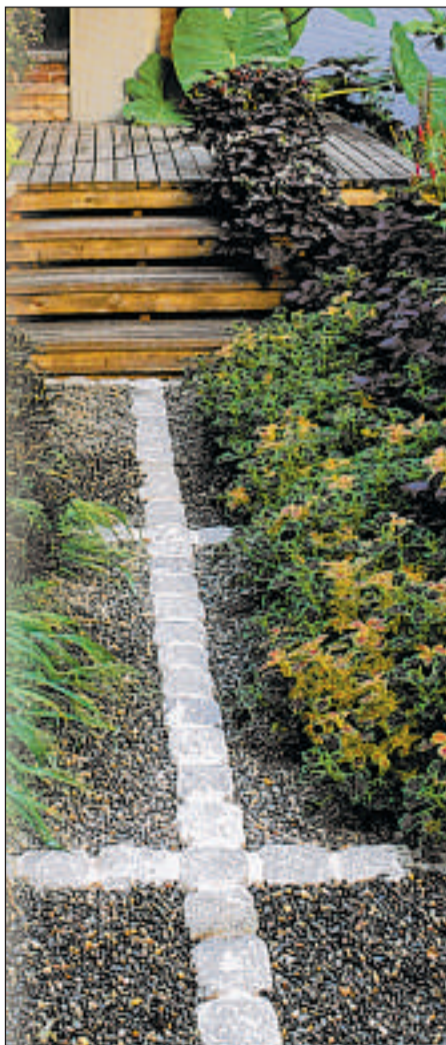
Whatever work you decide to undertake, make sure you plan it all well in advance. This is best done on paper, so you can get a feel for the dimensions involved. Remember that if you have a deck, it is the deck boarding that basically governs the size.

Anyone who fancies a pergola should plan it on their deck layout first. The same pergola components can be used to build a free-standing feature or canopy off the house wall.

● Pictures from Backyard Blueprints by David Stevens (Jacqui Small)

● More information on all aspects of decking, from sourcing wood to finding quality craftsmen in your area, is available from the Timber Decking Association. [www.tda.org.uk](http://www.tda.org.uk)

**6** The beauty of decking is that it looks clean and modern, while at the same time adding warmth and a natural feel to the garden



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# NE interiors



Orchard House is only eight years old and Caroline, right, is sad to leave

The Turner family are on the move, leaving a stunning house and tulip-filled garden for the next residents



## Tiptoeing through the tulips...

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**A**S the name suggests, Orchard House in Kirkby Fleetham near Northallerton, was built on the orchard belonging to the former Manor house at the head of the village green. The last vestige of the orchard is a sad and spindly plum tree. It bears a few sweet and sticky fruit high up on the tree, but the wasps get the benefit before the family can pick them. However, the history of the grounds means that for a modern house – built in 1997 – the Turner family are lucky enough to have a garden bordered by mature trees. “The privacy and shelter are superb,” says Caroline, who lives there with husband Sam, a director of Sam Turner’s in Northallerton, and their five-year-old son Harry

Set back from the road, Orchard House was built in a traditional style by a local builder, and positioned right in the middle of its plot. At the front, a walled garden with iron gates leads onto the sweep of gravelled drive. Alpine planting tops the retaining wall to a woodland garden, sheltered by large limes, a copper beech, holly and sycamore. Here, in spring, woodland bulbs, cowslips and hellebores flower, while in autumn it’s brightened with Japanese anemones. A small pond with a fountain has water lilies, irises, arching grasses and a frog or two.

To either side of the house, planting brightens up the pathways. To one side trees blossom in spring, covering a metal archway with pink blooms. Hydrangea and hibiscus flower in summer. To the other side, a raised patio is surrounded with honeysuckle, roses and lavender, making it a fragrant place to sit in summer. The rear garden was mainly lawn and trees three years ago, until Caroline enlarged the borders and crammed them with favourite plants. Dicentra, or bleeding heart, in pink and white is a recurring theme. The ferny foliage and delicate flowers spread high and wide and create a brilliant display for months.

“We planted more than 100 tulips, mainly the ‘rhubarb and custard’ coloured parrot variety. I have let foxgloves and aquilegia self-seed around, pulling up those that are

invasive, but their pretty flowers fill the borders every summer,” says Caroline.

Cottage garden favourites, delphinium and penstemon thrive here, as well as lupins and hollyhocks. The garden is a private haven full of colour and interest, and a lovely place to spend long summer days. The rustic swing in the corner is smothered in clematis montana with its pinky-mauve flowers in spring and lush green foliage in summer and autumn.

Inside the house, the mood is more restrained. The riot of colours outside is tempered by cool neutrals within. “I am a conservative and traditional interior decorator,” says Caroline.

The spacious sitting room is a very pale stone colour. It contrasts well with the brick, stone and oak fireplace and provides a neutral backdrop for the vast collection of books, pictures and photographs that line the walls. Above the sofa (Tetrad from Barker and Stonehouse) is a beloved collection of family and friends’ photographs. Marks & Spencer pale gold coloured curtains match the straw coloured carpet that runs throughout the house.

Caroline repainted the dining room with Laura Ashley’s ‘faded gold’ and reupholstered the dining chairs (an heirloom from her husband’s family) in their ‘summer rose’ fabric, introducing scarlet to bring interest.

The kitchen leads from the dining room, and from that a dark green hardwood conservatory with a Fired Earth terracotta floor and squashy cream sofas with home-made toile de Jouy and silk cushions.

After three years of trials with paler colours, Caroline painted the walls of the kitchen in Craig and Rose’s ‘Arabian red’, to match the terracotta floor and bring out the warmth in the pale maple cabinets. The wall tiles are also terracotta coloured, with a racing green trim. The Rangemaster ceramic-topped range cooker is in the same green. The kitchen is small, but cleverly designed. Integral appliances include a fridge, freezer and dishwasher.

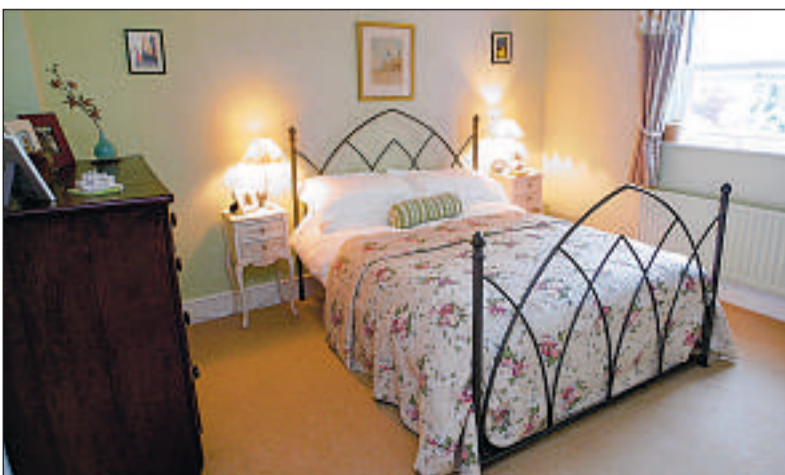
▶ Continued on page 8



Above: the kitchen – small, but perfectly formed; left: the flower covered bower in the garden and the family's large collection of books



Inside the house, the mood is more restrained. The riot of colours outside is tempered by cool neutrals within



Above left: the oak settle is an old family piece and has a New Testament inscription, "Knock & it shall be opened unto you". The cushions are from John Lewis (topiary) and Laura Ashley (velvet). Left: the pretty main bedroom



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**NE interiors**



**Tiptoeing through the tulips**

► Continued from page 6

Upstairs the three spacious bedrooms are painted pale, calming shades from Permoglaze and large built-in cupboards maximise storage. In the main bedroom a pale apple green contrasts with the berry red in the curtain material.

Caroline made the curtains from fabric from CB Furnishings in Northallerton, whom she relies on for most of her curtain fabric, trims, bedding and many decorative accessories.

The spacious landing is bright and airy thanks to windows (there are wooden sashes throughout) at either end and gives enough room for bookshelves and a writing desk. Both the main bathroom and the ensuite feature large powerful showers and the second bedroom is set up as an office, with separate phone line.

"We're moving from Orchard House this summer, and it's with some sadness that I'll leave. It's a warm house and a friendly house and one that has room for a family," says Caroline. "But my husband is a passionate gardener and wants a bigger garden, acres rather than square feet, so we're off again, somewhere else."

It's not all regret though. Caroline is relishing the thought of a new interior to work on.



● Orchard House is for sale at £350,000 through Stanton Mortimer (01609) 773004

**ADDRESS BOOK**

**CB Furnishings**, fabric, trimmings, bedding etc. Standard Way, Northallerton (01609) 772916

**Sam Turner & Sons Limited**, Darlington Road, Northallerton, paints, hardware and garden centre (01609) 772422

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

**Laura Ashley**, 1 South Parade, Northallerton paints, fabrics, lamps (01609) 780698

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Opposite: the mature garden is unusual for a modern house, and is the perfect place for al fresco dining in privacy. Above: the much-used conservatory overlooks the garden; the family bathroom

Pictures: RICHARD DOUGHTY

**NE window shopping**

**E**ACH season has its own mood, and summer has a more relaxed feel as we break routines with spontaneous outdoor entertaining and holidays. Rooms should be freshly dressed and more simply decorated, making them easier to look after and live in. Whip down curtains, remove furniture loose covers and bedspreads and get them cleaned, then store until the autumn. Once everything's stripped away you can literally look at rooms anew. Light will flood in through windows and give you fresh ideas for revamping your living space.

If you need help, John Lewis offers a free Furnishing Advice Service to help you refresh, revamp or even redesign your home room by room. Take a photograph of the room you wish to change and advisers will take you through colour schemes, fabric and accessories – really taking the headache out of redecorating. For nearest store call (08456) 049049.



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# NE gardening



Right: Monsignor Charlton and church member and garden volunteer Anne Press in a quiet corner of the garden at St Joseph's, above



Gardening correspondent BRIGID PRESS is transported back to her childhood every time she visits the verdant surrounds of a Stokesley church

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**Garden:** St Joseph's Roman Catholic Church  
**Location:** The northern edge of Stokesley, North Yorkshire  
**Age:** Well over 25 years  
**Use:** Summer fetes, quiet contemplation and wedding photographs

IT WAS like visiting an old friend. I used to come here once a week, every Sunday, and then twice a week when I was undergoing my confirmation training. We would normally sit midway down the right hand aisle, though I must confess though that it has been at least ten years since my last mass here. I felt no guilt, though, as I passed beneath the cobalt blue stained glass windows of Saint Joseph's Roman Catholic Church on the outskirts of Stokesley. In fact, it was the colour of these windows that gave me inspiration and sparked a thousand garden designs during my "blue glass" period. I nodded my thanks to the smiling statue that watched me from above as I made my way into the church surrounds.

Just before the hall (which brought back memories of sweet sherry and mince pies) is a small seating area, simply laid out to brick and gravel, with a few green benches sited against the wall. This marks the end of the formal part of the church grounds. Through the small wooden gate lies the rest of the verdant garden.

First impressions are of a typical English scene. A large, well mown lawn, surrounded by a backdrop of evergreen shrubs and interspersed with blocks of bouncy, colourful perennials. Glimpses of circular and arched stained glass windows, and warm, old brickwork add to the sense of history and spirituality.

The first rest area is an immaculately weeded patio made from old, buff coloured, flagstones. To one side is a 'fence' made from the remains of a fancy mullioned window. The border to the other side is filled with restful blue hues made up of pansies, lavender, geranium and aquilegia. A large mid-blue abutilon stands guard near the gate, whilst the soft white foxgloves run amok in un-uniformed fashion amongst the rest of the carefully planted specimens.

The scent of a large wild bird cherry tree

draws you out of the sanctity of the patio area, down a path of old marker stones and column pieces towards the greenhouse. In here are dahlias, lilies and chrysanthemums waiting patiently in limbo, ready to be planted out in any gaps that appear in the summer border. The strawberries are already flowering under glass and I can almost taste the tantalising fruit on my tongue. In another few weeks the virtual juices would become reality.

The greenhouse is bounded by the large cottage border. This houses just about every plant typical to a country garden. There are big mounds of hostas pushing their leathery leaves up in a fountain of foliage, offset by the sharp shadows of crocosmia behind them. Phlox, geranium and creeping campanula soften the scene. Iris, Japanese anemone and big bunches of scabious will add height in the late summer months, but for now just sit simmering in gentle green mounds.

A large, deep purple rhododendron marks the beginning of the shrub border. Here the canopy is made up of mature horse chestnuts, pussy willow, sycamore, rowan and oak. The sunlight filters through and creates a dappled woodland effect on the underneath shrubbery of mahonia, broom, escalonia and berberis. Birds scurry and rustle behind their leafy camouflage, safe in the knowledge that it would take half an hour with a machete to hack through the luscious growth to get to them.

A series of neatly clipped golden leylandii adds control to the scene. They also hide a bench on the edge of the glade, constructed from large stone slabs (reminiscent of ancient headstones), which makes an ideal place to rest and contemplate the generous and comfortable solitude of the garden.

Wild lilacs, with their smaller but more delicately perfumed flowers mingle with wild roses and variegated elder, and then, quite unexpectedly the leaden frame of an arched window stands serenely in the grass. It is the unusual, but inventive support structure for a climbing hydrangea, and acts as a full stop to the borders. A wildlife area lies behind it, filled with hedge parsley, bluebells and honesty and bounded by an old, warped wrought iron gate.

The garden becomes more formal from here on in. Compost bays, filled with the flakiest,



Pictures: RICHARD DOUGHTY

crumbliest soil form the working heart of the garden. It is where all green life ends, and all new life begins. Much of this life-giving mulch goes onto the vegetable garden which provides Monsignor Charlton with blackcurrants, raspberries, gooseberries and rhubarb. He likes his soft fruit, but his favourite are the large, juice-laden berries that dangle from his much prized thornless bramble.

The garden is tended by various groups and individuals. Monsignor will potter around, weeding as he contemplates his day's work. One of the parishioners mows the lawn, whilst another oversees the borders.

The millennium volunteers from Northallerton College do much of the backbreaking digging over and planting up. They are led by Donna, who lives locally and regularly attends the church. She has an ulterior motive in keeping the garden looking its best. She is getting married at Saint Joseph's next month, and the after ceremony pictures will be taken... in the garden.



*It is where all green life ends, and all new life begins*

Decorative brickwork is a feature of the church garden

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Sir John Ropner with visitor Elizabeth Estensen and her children, walking the dogs at picturesque Thorp Perrow

**THORP PERROW ARBORETUM**

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Contact details: Thorp Perrow Arboretum, Bedale, North Yorkshire DL8 2PR (01677) 425323, [www.thorpperrow.com](http://www.thorpperrow.com)  
Opening times: Open from dawn to dusk all year round.  
Admission to the arboretum and falcons: £5.75 adults, £4.40 OAPs, £2.95 children, under fours free.

Special events: Saturday, July 30, 7.30pm - Bats and Birds Evening. Meet birds of prey followed by a slide show and talk on bats. Sunday, August 7 - Owl, Butterfly and Dragonfly Day. Talk on owls followed by a flying display and guided butterfly and dragonfly tour. Wednesday, August 10 and Tuesday, August 16, 11am-3pm - children's activity days.

The long summer holidays are here at last so SARAH FOSTER suggests some places in the region that can't fail to keep the family amused



# Haunts for the holidays

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Contact details: The Forbidden Corner, The Tuggill Park Estate, Coverdale, Middleham, Leyburn, North Yorkshire DL8 4TJ (01969) 640638, [www.yorkshirenet.co.uk/theforbiddencorner/](http://www.yorkshirenet.co.uk/theforbiddencorner/)

Opening times: Open every day from March 24-October 31; 12 noon-6pm Monday to Saturday and 10am-6pm Sundays and bank holidays.

Admission: £7 adults, £6 senior citizens, £5 children, £23 family ticket.

Admission by advance booking only.



**THE BOWES MUSEUM**

The museum has a collection of European fine and decorative arts from 1400-1875 that is unrivalled in the North of England. It is set in 23 acres of gardens and parkland and has a café and gift shop.

Contact details: The Bowes Museum, Barnard Castle, County Durham DL12 8NP (01833) 690606,

[www.bowesmuseum.org.uk](http://www.bowesmuseum.org.uk)

Opening times: Open daily from 11am-5pm.

Admission: £7 adults, £6 concessions, under 16s and disabled carers free.

Special events: Free Food and Craft Festival with rides, July 23 and 24, 10am to 5pm.

**BEAMISH MUSEUM**

SET in over 300 acres of countryside, Beamish vividly recreates life in the North of England in the early 1800s and 1900s and is winner of both the British Museum of the Year and European Museum of the Year Awards. Attractions include Home Farm, the Colliery Village and working trams and buses.

Contact details: Beamish, The North of England Open Air Museum, Beamish, County Durham DH9 0RG, 0191-370 4000, [www.beamish.org.uk](http://www.beamish.org.uk)

Opening times: Saturday, March 19-Sunday, October 30, open daily from 10am-5pm. Last admission 3pm. Admission: £15 adults, £12 over 60s, £9 children aged five-16, under fives free.

Special events: Saturday and Sunday, July 16 and 17 - National Archaeology Weekend with demonstrations and activities including baking, calligraphy and Northumbrian pipe music. Saturday, August 6 - Georgian Fair: a recreation of an 1825 fair with fire-eating, corn dolly making and military drills. Saturday, August 27 - Horse Ploughing Match.

For a full list of events, contact the museum.





**EDEN CAMP**

**THIS** is an original Prisoner of War Camp, built in 1942 and converted into a museum.

Attractions include a prisoners' canteen, officers' mess tearooms and a two-part assault course for children.

**Contact details:** Eden Camp, Malton, North Yorkshire YO17 6RT (01653) 697777, www.edencamp.co.uk

**Opening times:** 10am-5pm seven days a week. Last admission 4pm.

**Admission:** £4.50 adults, £3.50 children, senior citizens, disabled.

**Young visitors to Eden Camp discover what it would have been like to live in wartime**



**Last year's teddy bear day at Crook Hall**

**CROOK HALL**

**THIS** is a Grade I listed medieval manor house right in the centre of Durham with a café, fountain and gardens. It is said to be haunted by the ghost of the White Lady.

**Contact details:** Crook Hall and gardens, Frankland Lane, Sidegate, Durham DH1 5SZ, 0191-384 8028, www.crookhallgardens.co.uk

**Opening times:** Open Sunday-Thursday throughout July and August.

**Admission:** £4 adults, £3.50 concessions, £12 family ticket.

**Special events:** Sunday, July 11 – Ghost Hunt. Join a scary tour of the haunted parts of the hall (over fives only). August 1-31 – Art in the Garden. Sixth annual exhibition of work by Northern artists. Sunday, August 28 and Monday, August 29 – Bring a Teddy Day. Teddy themed activities in the garden. Children who bring a teddy get a free drink.

**DISCOVERY MUSEUM**

**DISCOVERY** is the region's biggest free museum, charting Newcastle's history from the Romans to the present day and featuring Tyneside inventions that have changed the world. Over the last four years, it has undergone a £12.25m transformation to include four new displays exploring life on the River Tyne.

**Contact details:** Discovery Museum, Blandford Square, Newcastle NE1 4JA, 0191-232 6789, www.twmuseums.org.uk/discovery/

**Opening times:** 10am-5pm Monday to Saturday, 2pm-5pm Sunday.

**Admission:** free.

**Special events:** Happy Birthday Miffy: a celebration of the work of Dick Bruna. Until September 5.



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## me and my wardrobe



Pictures:  
STUART BOULTON



**Les Dales is the senior buyer at The House, which has stores in Yarm, Harrogate and Leeds. Based at the Yarm store, Les has been buying for The House for four years. Les is due to be married this year in Las Vegas and has two children.**

### HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR LOOK?

Quite casual really (I only ever wear a suit for work). I'm into my rock and roll music so most of the time I look like some kind of Sixties throwback! I'm practically always in denim. I suppose with the rock look being quite current at the moment I could be classed as 'down with the kids' - but most of the time I just look like some silly geezer out of The Who or the Beatles.

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

The second-hand Wrangler denim jacket I picked up in a used denim store in London. It's falling to bits but it is still an essential part of my wardrobe. Accessory-wise, it has to be shades - you can't have enough shades.

### WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR WORST BUY?

When I was about 19 or so I bought this Paul Smith casual cotton hooded jacket with matching trousers. It was grey with a huge bold vertical stripe running down it. The worst thing is, I actually used to wear them together at nightclubs and raves - on reflection, it looked horrendous. I looked like an extra from Porridge.

### AND WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR MOST EXPENSIVE?

I bought a pair of Gold Label Vivienne Westwood Bondage Trousers in the early 1990s from her King's Road shop. They were

quite rare even then and were the last pair. They cost me £300 - and I loved them. Very cool. I still have them, though the waistline prohibits me from ever putting them on these days (probably a blessing).

### WHERE ARE YOUR FAVOURITE SHOPS?

In terms of location, without a doubt - London. It's better than Milan, New York or Paris in my opinion. I don't really have a particular favourite store - obviously I shop in The House for most things I need.

### WHICH CELEBRITY'S STYLE DO YOU ADMIRE?

I suppose my modern-day style icon would be Kate Moss. I also admire John Lennon for his left-of-centre quirkiness and probably Liam Gallagher for his confidence and sharpness with the threads. Other notable icons of cool for me would be Mick Jagger (1968-1974), Deborah Harry in her day, and George Best was a bit of a dapper geezer too.

### WHO'S YOUR FAVOURITE DESIGNER?

Tom Ford. Untouchable.

*Most of the time I just look like some silly geezer out of The Who or the Beatles*

### ABOVE, LEFT TO RIGHT

- Prada Sport creased nylon biker, Blue Blood overdyed denim jeans, Umbro by Kim Jones trainers
- Dries Van Noten black linen two-button, Prada loafers, Helmut Lang white shirt
- Wrangler denim jacket, Armani silk scarf, Levis 501 slim fit jeans, cowboy boots, vintage shades

You can find collections from Prada Sport, Umbro Kim Jones, Blue Blood and Armani amongst many other men's and women's collections at The House. Stores are at High Street, Yarm, Cleveland; Cheltenham Crescent, Harrogate; Street Lane, Roundhay, Leeds. For more information call 01642 790816 or visit [www.thehouseyarm.co.uk](http://www.thehouseyarm.co.uk)  
● Shopping in Yarm: See page 16

# NE out on the town

NE Magazine's style experts, Judie McCourt and Allison McKay, take to the social honeypots of the region in search of style and individuality



## McCourt & McKay

**THE ATLANTIC BAR AND GRILL** SITUATED at the top of Coniscliffe Road in Darlington. The Atlantic Bar and Grill brings socialising and dining together in an informal setting. Open from 8am until 11pm, it is a great place to meet for coffee, have a leisurely lunch, supper or just a drink. The décor is warm and welcoming with a modern approach.

We were celebrating its opening with the many friends of owner Les Langley who also owns the Atlantic Bar and Club in Duke Street, Darlington.

### JULIA SMITH

JULIA, 29, works as a PA. Her favourite shops are Debenhams in Stockton, Zara in Newcastle and for something a bit special, she heads for Psyche in Middlesbrough. Julia was wearing a brown top by Asda, jeans from Topshop and shoes from & Eve at Yarm. As for beauty, forget about expensive cleansers. Julia recommends Baby Wipes. To happily hum along to, Julia's CD of the moment is Tony Christie.

### DAVID PENMAN

DAVID is the proprietor of David Penman Cars, a Seat dealership in Darlington.

Like John and Les, David got the smart/casual look just right, mixing a Ted Baker jacket with Gucci shirt and jeans and Geoffrey West shoes.

David is a very active person and loves nothing better than hitting the slopes with his snowboard and skis. Shopping is not his favourite pastime so to make it more of a pleasure he heads to Covent Garden in London which houses the labels he likes all within a short distance of each other.

David is listening to Snow Patrol and the Futureheads.

### JOHN COLLINS

JOHN is a managing

director of Reflex Vehicle Solutions. He was impressed with the look of the Atlantic Bar and Grill and believes it fills a much needed slot in Darlington.

John managed to look casually stylish with quality clothing – Donna Karan jeans, a Roy Robson jacket, Van Heusen shirt, Church shoes and Tiffany cufflinks. Although he shops in London and Leeds, he is always impressed with the quality and service at Geoffrey Gillow in Darlington's Grange Road. At the moment he is listening to Kaiser Chiefs, Faithless and James Blunt.

### LES LANGLEY

LES, 38, is owner of the Atlantic Bar and Grill. Les has a passion for fashion and this was no exception – Firetrap jeans, Versace shirt and tie, Paul Smith jacket and Geoffrey West shoes. Running two businesses doesn't leave much time for shopping but any spare moment Les gets, he heads for Flannels in Newcastle and Zara in London. His health and skincare regime consists of football, a balanced diet and Nivea cream for the skin. To relax while driving, he listens to Stevie Wonder.

### MARIA LANCASTER

MARIA, 39, is a medical rep. The Atlantic Bar and Club has provided a perfect venue for Maria to host her business meetings in one of the private rooms. Maria stood out with her slim figure, which fitted perfectly into a colourful dress by Miss Sixty from Leggs in Darlington. Maria is a fan of Leggs and Élan and is always the first to check out the season's latest looks.

To keep herself trim, happy and healthy, Maria doesn't eat bread or pasta, she teaches keep fit, washes her hair twice a week, uses Christian Dior cleanser and toner as well as Kanebo products.

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

amcreativeproductions.com



JULIA SMITH



MARIA LANCASTER



JOHN COLLINS



LES LANGLEY



CLAIRE COAKLEY

### CLAIRE COAKLEY

CLAIRE, 26, is a bank manager, but her looks, personality and style defy the stereotype. Claire likes to shop in Diva in Yarm. She was wearing a top from Warehouse, skirt by Tunnel in Leeds, a cardigan from Attitude in Yarm and jewellery from Fenwick's. She recommends, Terra Dior blusher, lip gloss by Estee Lauder and a good dentist.

## NE beauty



### Chocolate without the weight gain

**TREATMENT:** Chocotherapy  
**WHERE:** The Works, Tall Trees, Yarm (01642) 785 440

THERE can't be many who can say they've been covered in chocolate, but like a porn star and a Curly Wurly, I'm now one of them. Arriving for my chocotherapy, I admit to being a spa novice. As someone who has never had a beauty treatment, and considers a haircut a luxury, I'm unsure of what to expect. Salon owner Andrea Harrison, my therapist for the day, assures me that I'll enjoy it, predicting a sublime feeling of well-being.

Although new to the North-East – Andrea believes she's the first to introduce it – chocotherapy has been established in the South for some time. It involves pure cocoa blended with essential oils being rubbed into the skin, the smell and feel of real chocolate evoking hedonistic bliss. The one thing you can't do is eat it, but the idea is that you won't want to, being so high on pleasure-giving endorphins.

We step into the treatment room and with the music soft and lights dimmed, the atmosphere is instantly relaxing. Andrea discreetly leaves me and when she returns, I'm lying as requested beneath a towel, in only a pair of disposable pants.

This treatment is not for the ultra modest, as Andrea explains when she removes the towel, and under normal circumstances, she wouldn't recommend it for a first-timer. However I've said I'm up for anything and actually, I'm quite comfortable.

We strike up an easy conversation as Andrea gets to work, covering me with a mixture of sea salt and almond oil. She rubs this into my skin, as she would before any treatment, to get rid of the dead flakes. A wipe down with mitts is next, leaving me clean and ready for the chocolate.

This has been melted and gently warmed, and before applying it, Andrea drops a small blob onto my back. When I confirm that the temperature's fine, she begins massaging it into my body, covering every inch with the brown sticky paste. The smell is delicious, completely enveloping me and lingering long after the treatment.


Fully coated, I'm wrapped in plastic and left to absorb.

When it's time to clean me up Andrea is unfazed, using a toner to help remove the cocoa. In a short while, I'm back to my pale self – but with luxuriously silky skin. A coating of moisturiser completes the treatment, which has taken about an hour.

I leave the salon feeling calm and refreshed – the way I feel after a workout. I may not have burned any calories, but at least I haven't consumed any.

Sarah Foster

● A full body chocotherapy treatment costs £40. You can also have a chocotherapy facial, £36, or a body treatment and facial combined, £50.

<p><b>SAMPLE MENU</b></p> <p><b>STARTER</b> Twice Baked Swiss Cheese Soufflé</p> <p><b>MAIN COURSE</b> Ribeye Steak, Parillada Chimichori, Crushed Potatoes and Red Wine</p> <p><b>DESSERT</b> Raspberry Crème Bruléé</p>	
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**NE shopping**



**YARM**



# Something for everyone

With its designer shops and trendy eateries, Yarm has established itself as a must-destination for the fashion conscious. Women's Editor LINDSAY JENNINGS discovers its charms

**T**HINGS have definitely been happening at the designer store, The House in Yarm, since Peter and Steven Bell took over. The brothers bought the store in August last year from Steel River and have set about expanding the business, including an extensive refurbishment of the Grade II listed High Street building.

Lucy Smith, retail operation manager at The House, and buyer Les Dales, say the exciting plans have allowed them to target a younger customer while keeping their classic buyers happy.

"The House is very well known for its classic collections, and we're not moving away from that, but we've brought in labels such as Diesel and David Bitton (who has been dubbed the new Diesel), to appeal to younger buyers," says Les. "The idea is that there's room for everyone at The House."

As part of the expansion, the café bistro area is being doubled in size thanks to a beautiful glass roofed extension. With the kitchen size tripled, it will also be available for public functions with a licensed bar.

Regular customers will also be aware that the homeware department has been removed in favour of a fabulous new shoes and accessories section – a must-see for any Sex and the City girls out there. Shoes, handbags and hats by designers such as Marc Jacobs, Vivienne Westwood, Rodo, Philip Treacy and Okapi will soon be joined by glamorous Gina shoes, beloved of red carpet celebrities.

Upstairs, a contemporary hair centre has been created, so shoppers can ensure they look their best for a fabulous night out. And, not to be outdone, the menswear sections offers something for every man with style, from jeans at £80 to tailored suits.

The Bells are also expanding their designer store concept with the opening of new designer stores at Cheltenham Crescent, Harrogate, and at Street Lane, Roundhay, Leeds.

"There's so much going on, it's just been non-stop since last August," says Lucy.

The rest of Yarm's thriving High Street, which is one of the widest in England, also boasts a range of individual fashion boutiques. With its light and airy interior, The Conservatory offers a wonderful relaxing ambience in which to choose from their collection of classic, contemporary designs.

Further down the High Street, Strides menswear and View womenswear – both

owned by Howard Egglestone, who also has stores in Durham City – offer a colourful choice for the younger market, from Ted Baker to Firetrap. Layered t-shirts in pinks, yellows and greens are proving popular with Yarm's fashion-conscious males while candy colours are still hot for the girls.

Yarm also has plenty to offer for the fashionable home. Cameo specialises in the French romantic look with everything you could want for the girly boudoir. Beautiful crystal chandeliers from as little as £28, beaded cushions and tactile throws in pastel colours and creams, add to the opulent feel.

Owner Sue Harriman, who has stores in Stokesley and Norton, says: "We're finding the Marilyn Monroe look with her 1950s film star glamour is very popular at the moment."

And when the feet are tired from too much shopping, the attraction of Yarm lies in the vast array of trendy eateries and bars to choose from, from Thai and Indian food to French and Italian.

Chadwick's offers a continental feel with a mouth-watering menu, while in the warm surroundings of The Brasserie Restaurant typical fare can include twice-baked Roquefort cheese soufflé followed by pan-fried lemon sole.

The Hide Café Bar and Grill offers an extensive menu to suit all purses and its rich wooden floors and caramel colours provide a relaxing environment in which to unwind at the bar with a drink at the end of a long day. Alternatively, why not stop off for lunch and enjoy a crayfish and rocket sandwich in granary bread with firecracker lobster crisps and a flavoured latte?

*"The House is very well known for its older, classic collections, and we're not moving away from that, but we've brought in labels such as Diesel and David Bitton to appeal to younger buyers"*





The newly converted conservatory area at The House. Below: Sue Harriman in Cameo and The Hide Bar, a perfect place to relax after a hard day's shopping



Pictures: STUART BOULTON

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## gadget man

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The incredible success of the iPod has led to an unexpected boom in reading – without the need to ever open your eyes

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**G**OING abroad this summer? You'll be needing something to read on the beach then. How about Dan Brown's *Da Vinci Code* or maybe your tastes run to something like *Brimstone*, the latest sizzler from acclaimed American duo Lincoln Preston?

Whatever you like to read, the chances are this summer you won't be cramming the suitcase with paperbacks. All you need is an iPod or any other solid state MP3 player and you've got enough room to store the contents of a library that would make even the Bodleian look a bit threadbare.

Audio books have been around for ten to 15 years but until now they have always been looked upon as a bit of a cop-out. Most of them are edited for length (a full blown adaptation usually runs to several hours and most audio books last for three hours or less), some of them for content and a few even add sound effects for listeners unable to think for themselves.

But the success of solid state/hard disk drive audio players has turned the audio book scene into a hive of activity. The market is now worth more than £70m annually – and sales are growing fast.

Waterstone's says demand for audio books is up by 35 per cent this year at a time when the paperback market (Dan Brown aside) is stagnant at best.

And, as if to show that audio books are now socially acceptable to all classes, some of the most popular choices are classics such as *Ulysses* and even *War and Peace*.

Originally aimed at elderly readers whose eyesight meant they couldn't enjoy a book, audio adaptations span the entire readership spectrum.

Celebrity readers (such as David Jason who narrates some of the *Inspector Frost* audio books) have helped encourage sales among younger buyers.

And now the inevitable has happened – audio books have joined the iPod generation.

Audible, a trader of online audio books, has been a player in the US for several

years (my Compaq 9000 PDA came with an Audible player five years ago) but now it has launched a dedicated UK reader service.

For a small fee Audible will provide a downloadable version of popular titles. It can be copied to an iPod or a memory card for use with a PDA.

The BBC has already embraced MP3 compression technology to cram several stories on a single CD. *Doctor Who* fans were among the first to enjoy this and the results are terrific – the spoken word condenses far more efficiently than a complex piece of music.

The Beeb reckons downloading will do for audio books what it did for the music business. Or will it?

Maybe I'm a bit old fashioned (should I be admitting this in a gadgets column?) but I still enjoy reading the traditional way.

There's something about a book. The way it smells when you open it for the first time, the inevitable battered appearance it acquires as you plunge into the narrative and the little marks it picks up along the way. A good book is like an old friend – and I enjoy seeing it on my shelves, knowing that I could pick it up again and be transported back to the first time I started reading it. Anyway, listening to audio books just sends me to sleep. I wake up an hour later and haven't the faintest idea what's gone on.

Ah well, I guess I'll just have to leave a few pairs of socks at home this summer to make way for a copy of Lincoln Preston's *Cabinet of Curiosities*. You haven't read it yet? Better order a copy straight away – or download one if you're not sure...

*Whatever you like to read, the chances are this summer you won't be cramming the suitcase with paperback*



Ginny Dick: inspired by an aunt in Botswana who used to send her beautiful beaded chokers



Earrings from around £20; bracelets from £59; necklaces from £85. Ginny D jewellery is available from [www.ginnyd.co.uk](http://www.ginnyd.co.uk). Local stockists include Georgie's in Harrogate and Northallerton and Elan on Grange Road in Darlington. You can contact Ginny via the website or tel: 07739 258568/01609 748750. Gift vouchers available.

# A sparkling vocation

**F**ORMER instructor and examiner with the British Horse Society, Ginny Dick is probably one of the few women who could look glamorous mucking out. Her brother is top catwalk designer Giles Deacon so a sense of style is in the genes, and now Ginny's branching out into the world of fashion too.

She's gradually putting her equestrian work behind her in favour of a career designing jewellery, something of a glamorous contrast with her years in the horsey world.

After having children - Harry, now ten and Zoe, seven - continuing a job that was largely carried out at evenings and weekends fast became unworkable. Added to that, a fractured spine meant that Ginny's competing days were all but over, so she made the decision to give up equestrian pursuits to spend more time with her family.

"Children are little for such a short time and I wanted to be with them. I'm an all-or-nothing sort of person," she says.

Her first foray into jewellery making was largely accidental. "I have an aunt in Botswana who would send me beautiful African beaded chokers," she says. "At the Yorkshire Show I saw a woman making similar chokers on a wooden loom and thought 'I could do that' so I bought a loom and had a go. I made my chokers with coloured beads and hung turquoise stones or antique beads from them. The look was not at all the ethnic look of the original pieces, but friends started to admire my chokers and asked me to make them one... and so it went on."

The Ginny D jewellery brand was born.

From her peaceful home in the North Yorkshire countryside, Ginny hand-makes every piece in her collection. Semi-precious stones, Swarovski crystals and antique beads are combined with silver and ribbon to make one-off pieces in a gorgeous array of sweetie shop colours. Each piece can take anything from half an hour to a full day.

"It depends whether I'm on a roll," says Ginny. "Sometimes a piece just comes together and looks right first time, other times I'll spend ages getting it just so."

The jewellery, sold in the shops and at fairs and shows, is all individually made and

A hobby making jewellery has turned into a full-time business for horsewoman Ginny Dick. CAROLINE TURNER reports

designed, each piece being a complete one-off. The pieces available through Ginny's website are limited edition designs, which are all very similar, in different colourways. Saying this, the nature of using semi-precious stones is that no two pieces of jewellery will ever be completely identical.

I expect Ginny's workroom to be a riot of colour, a jumble of ribbons and beads, but she shows me into an immaculate slate-floored study. She opens the doors of a small pine computer cabinet to reveal an immaculately tidy and organised work space. An anglepoise lamp sheds light on a small pull-out desk, and boxes and bags of precisely labelled beads and crystals. At this tiny space, Ginny sits and makes enough jewellery to supply five shops, her website stock and to take to numerous shows and fairs throughout the year.

Ginny's jewellery is colour themed according to season. This summer, her core colours are turquoises and aquas, pinks both pale and bright, muted lavenders and amethyst shades, and a stunning collection of black with primary coloured antique glass beads. Looking through her stock is every girly girl's dream.

The jewellery is very feminine, very pretty, and yet there would be something to appeal to every taste, and to suit every age. A short necklace of chunky black onyx and silver beads is classic and no-nonsense, even businesslike. The exact opposite would be a long, delicate necklace of pink opal, rose quartz, freshwater pearls and crystals with heart pendants and gingham ribbon.

"I use colours that I like, but also keep an eye on what's in fashion. There are some fashions that I don't like myself, so I stick with what appeals to me and just hope everyone else likes it too," says Ginny. "So far I haven't made any major mistakes."

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## NE motoring



Sexy: "the Ediemobile's looks go much further than skin deep"

# Desperately in love with the Ediemobile

### Nissan 350Z Roadster

**T**HE latest chapter has closed on life in Wisteria Lane and we will have to wait until next year to see whether the hunky plumber is shot by the slightly deranged son he never knew he had.

But as we dwell on our lives without Desperate Housewives, and how we will sate our Wednesday night addictions, it is comforting to think that it isn't just the viewers who are sorry to see the show go off air.

Life in the Nissan press office won't be the same either after enjoying one of the best product placements they have had in many years.

Right at the heart of the cult TV show, just slightly to the left of Edie Britt's silicon boobs and sitting astride a set of sexy alloys every week was the 350Z Roadster, something even more beautiful than the collective looks of a gaggle of desperate housewives, however toned, starved and shaped by the surgeon's knife.

The roadster is the topless version of the divine 350Z, one of my absolute favourites but surpassed in this case by its more revealing sibling.

Nissan couldn't hope for better exposure than being on the show, the Z appealing to men and women alike but for very different reasons. When Susan joined Edie for a run in the countryside, top off (the car that is) it was an episode to be treasured.

Ironically, the soft top Z car is probably the one model in the range that doesn't need much marketing help. But I suppose such a branding exercise helps lift the whole corporate image.

Not for a long time in my experience has a car attracted so much attention on the roads of the North-East and North Yorkshire.

"Cool car mister," comments abounded from the region's youth - no surprise there. But when two more mature ladies hammered on the window of their preparatory school and mouthed: "Ooh, we love your car," then I knew the Z had real impact.

It's a car to be looked at, a vehicle to be seen in and at least two of my friends insisted on

Motoring correspondent IAN LAMMING is head over heels in lust with the the sexy, curvaceous, head-turning Z

hood-down sorties around Darlington's most trendy areas.

Thing is, from a driver's point of view, it's a car to be driven too. The Ediemobile's looks go much further than skin deep. Underneath that glossy exterior lies a truly great sports car.

Firstly the sound; great in the hardtop, even better in the roadster as it is uninhibited by metal or glass. In town it burbles menacingly, in the countryside it bellows its symphony with fortitude.

Secondly the engine; a 280PS 3.5 litre V6 masterpiece which not only feels right but goes fantastically well. It will chug along in sixth gear with no revs on the clock; it will hare off to the red line without protest to the land of silly speeds. And overall it won't break the bank, averaging a healthy 28 miles per gallon, amazing for this class of car.

Handling is superb too; not too hard, far from harsh, but nicely firm to round all bends with aplomb. Brembo brakes are peerless and just the thing to stop the Z on a sixpence and the six speed gearbox is a true gem, slotting home neatly into any ratio you choose.

Practically speaking, the Z is easy to live with as well as there's a decent sized boot, the hood is electric and there is no compromise on comfort. The interior is nice, if a tad plasticky, but there's no doubting you are in a sports car when you see the shape of the clocks.

I'm in love with the 350Z Roadster and I don't care who knows it so my desperation is now twofold. Not only do I have to endure life without Desperate Housewives for months to come but also a life without the Z in it. How desperate is that...?

Driving passion: the Nissan 350Z Roadster, as driven by Edie (Nicolette Sheridan) in Desperate Housewives, far right



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## NE connections

# A bite out of the Big Apple

America is famous as the birthplace of fast food, but what else can their chefs rustle up. KEITH ALLAN and LYNNE GRAY look at what's on the menu in New York



The Hotel Plaza Athénée on East 64th Street and early morning traffic on Fifth Avenue



**‘W**E can offer you 5.30 or 9.30,” came the polite reply when we tried to book at Aureole, Charlie Palmer’s famous restaurant on Manhattan’s Upper East Side. We plumped for 5.30 since our body clocks were still leaning towards UK time, which meant it was 10.30 in the evening and we were starving.

Quite by chance it was within easy walking distance of our hotel, the Plaza Athénée, also in the fashionable East Side of Manhattan, a stroll away from Central Park. It seemed a little odd as we set off in the late afternoon sunshine for our dinner. And sure enough everything looked a little ghostly as we stepped inside with only one table occupied. “You’re very quiet,” we said to the maitre d’. “Not for long,” he assured us. Within 20 minutes, it was buzzing.

The cuisine at Aureole is described as ‘progressive American’, with signature dishes such as slow poached Maine lobster, seared Hudson valley foie gras and fresh salmon tartare. As it happened, at the very time we were in New York dining at Aureole, Charlie Palmer himself was in England taking part in The American Food Revolution, being staged at Raymond Blanc’s Le Manoir aux Quat’Saisons at Great Milton near Oxford. Palmer was one of a group of eight American guest chefs cooking showcase, four-course lunches and seven-course dinners – the American way.

*We tried to picture it before 1858 when it was a sprawling swamp with working quarries and pig farms*

Apparently American gastronomy has a lot to teach us and Raymond Blanc obviously thinks it is high time to sit up and take notice.

At the Aureole we tucked into some lovely food, brought to us by pleasant, attentive waiters. And when it was time to go it was still light enough to take in a little bit of the south end of New York’s ‘backyard’.

Early mornings are amazing in Central Park. In the spring magnolias are in full bloom and only the odd jogger pounding past disturbs the peace of it all. You can also play football and croquet, skate and listen to a concert. At weekends cars are banned from the park.

We tried to picture it before 1858 when it was a sprawling swamp with working quarries and pig farms. Ten million cartloads of stone and topsoil turned it into nearly a thousand acres of lakes and meadows, with half a million trees and shrubs.

Upper East Side is a very well-to-do part of town. It was at the beginning of the 20th century that New York Society really took over the Upper East Side. Most of the mansions that once belonged to the likes of Carnegie and Guggenheim are now museums and embassies, but the rich and famous haven’t gone away. They have taken over grand apartment buildings on Fifth and Park Avenues, many of them overlooking Central Park and to help them spend their money chic shops and galleries are abundant, particularly along Madison Avenue.

At Christmas New York’s department stores take on a fantastic and festive look. The window displays at Bloomingdale’s on Third Avenue, Tiffany on Fifth Avenue and 57th Street, Barneys on Madison Avenue, Lord & Taylor, also on Fifth Avenue, to men-

tion only a few, have spectacular window displays. In fact the whole city lights up. The Empire State Building turns red and green, the Grand Central terminal is lit with lasers and a giant snowflake hangs over the intersection of Fifth Avenue and 57th Street.

Our hotel, the Plaza Athénée, was nicely placed in the middle of all this. Very cosy, and run like clockwork by Bernard Lackner the general manager, it is a member of The Leading Hotels of the World. We had a suite and a bathroom dripping with marble.

In the lounge one evening, perusing the dinner menu, we spotted pheasant as a main course. We politely asked the very pleasant lady taking drinks orders why pheasant was on the menu in April when it was out of season. “Good question,” she replied. “I will certainly ask the chef.” We ordered the seared diver sea scallops followed by the Florida Keys red snapper, all of which were delicious. Pudding was warm goats’ milk cheesecake. Later our dutiful, drinks-lady approached us. “You were quite right about the pheasant,” she said, “the chef thanks you very much and has taken it off the menu.”

Could you see that happening anywhere in Europe? We doubt it. No wonder the Americans are leading a food revolution.

● Keith Allan and Lynne Gray travelled to New York with American Airlines: Bookings: tel: 0845 7789789

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● Plaza Athenee, 37 East 64th Street, New York. Reservations: Leading Hotels of the World 00800 2888 8882. www.plaza-athenee.com

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## LIFE COACH

### LEARNING TO LISTEN



THE ability to listen well is essential for building good relationships. To listen fully, is to put all of your attention on that person. So often our minds are on other things; where we need to be next or what we want to say.

Being deeply listened to is a profound experience. Yet unless you’ve experienced it yourself, it is difficult to appreciate just how helpful it can be for someone. To listen fully is to hear the emotion and feelings underlying the words and, where possible, to understand and empathise.

Practise listening well. You might be pleasantly surprised at the responses you get from people.

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# How to have a perfect picnic

**T**HERE'S something instantly relaxing and exciting about being able to defy our changeable climate and enjoy a meal in the garden or a picnic away from home.

Beware though – there is more to fear than pesky wasps, spilt drinks or soggy sandwiches. You can easily ruin a feast with poor picnicware or wobbly furniture.

Banish sad plastic containers – practical but ugly – or worse, paper plates that always bend. They're a relic of the old days when outdoor eating was a rare treat.

Nowadays barbecues, outdoor heaters, and all the other patio mod cons mean most people can abandon the dining room at the first sign of sun.

David Herbert, author of *Picnics* (Conran Octopus, £14.99) says: "Picnics enhance any occasion. There's nothing nicer than spying blue skies and spontaneously putting everything in a basket and setting off for an outdoor eating adventure."

So whether you fancy posh picnics, lazy lunches in the garden or grown-up dinner parties, here's our pick of the picnicware.

## WOOLWORTHS

You'll need sunglasses whatever the weather if you choose its funky, vibrant two-tone picnicware. A plate costs £1.49; three compartment server £3.99; salad bowl £3.99; and picnic rug £4.99.



## ASDA

Even if skies are cloudy, Rainbow striped acrylic picnicware will brighten the scene. It bursts with colour and the 1970s inspired pattern is like a psychedelic meadow. Collection includes small salad bowl, 87p, dinner plate, 87p, large salad bowl, £1.97, and tray, £2.97. Alternatively, choose its blooming pretty floral picnicware. Plate, £1.48, salad bowl, £1.48, large salad bowl, £2.48, tumbler, 98p.



## GRAHAM & GREEN

Set an Eastern scene with Graham & Green's melamine picnicware, in candy sugar shades, which is for those who pride themselves on a stylish setting. Set of six cups, £17.70; set of side plates, £29.70; set of dinner plates, £43.50. Banish boring plastic containers and use the three-tier tiffin set, £26, to carry the goodies. Graham & Green: [www.grahamandgreen.co.uk](http://www.grahamandgreen.co.uk)



# NE directory

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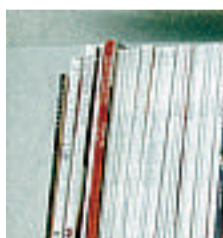
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