

The Northern Echo

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The lifestyle magazine
for the North-East

AUGUST 2004

MY STYLE

**Fashion designer
Kate Fearnley**

**OUTDOOR
LIVING**

**Patios with
personality**

WIN

**A garden
love seat**

**McCOURT
& McKAY**

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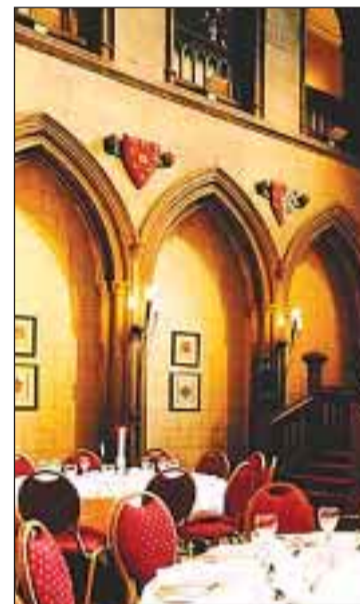
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sharon griffiths

“The arbour was designed so there was a handy little shelf on which to put your wine

*The kiss of the sun for pardon,
The song of the birds for mirth,
One is nearer God's heart in a garden
Than anywhere else on earth,*

– especially when you've got a large glass of wine in your hand...

For the last 20 years, it seems, we have filled our homes with plants, from modest African violets to giant rubber plants. We, for instance, once had an avocado that threatened to take over the dining room and trifid-like attacked unwary visitors. Even offices aren't safe – whether it's a secretary's spider plant in a yoghurt pot or a fully fledged indoor garden in an atrium. Posh.

Then there was the craze for conservatories and an opportunity for even more greenery, so that gradually that room that was meant to bring more space and light into the house collected so many plants that it began to resemble a tropical rain forest and no one would have been surprised to find a multi-coloured parrot fluttering in from the undergrowth joining you for coffee.

So once we'd filled the house with plants there was only one thing left to do...

Move out into the garden.

The British have always loved their gardens. But in the past have always been a bit puritanical about it. Gardens have also meant hard work. Digging, planting, pruning, weeding, creaking knees and aching back, dirt under your nails and stings and scratches up your arms. Somehow we felt we were justified in being outside only if we were working there.

Shame.

The continentals had quite a different approach, of course. Their lives are pretty much lived outside. Pavement cafes, terraces, balconies. The great outdoors for them is just an extension of home. They have the sun, of course, and it makes a difference.

They also have wonderful plants that just seem to grow with crazy energy, tumble over walls, look amazing, and smell delicious with very little attention. Bliss.

But we get the sun sometimes too. And when it shines it can bring a new dimension into our lives – and a lot more space into our homes.

Our last holiday cottage was small but brilliantly designed. Outside the kitchen

was a small patio enclosed by honeysuckle and mint. It was a real suntrap and had the sun from dawn until mid afternoon. We ate our breakfast out there, sat with the papers and a pot of coffee. And as the sun shone down, it filled us not just with warmth but with a wonderful sense of wellbeing. Combined with the heady scent of honeysuckle and the sharpness of the mint, it was close to heaven. Impossible not to relax.

Then when the sun had moved round we just moved round with it to another part of the garden. Here the owners had built a small arbour, a large bench, sheltered by a trellis arch covered with roses. It had full sun from midday until the final dramatic rays of the sunset over the Celtic sea.

Best of all, the arbour was cunningly designed so there was a handy little shelf on which to put your wine glass.

Given that we had temperatures in the 80s for most of the holiday, there was something to be said for never moving from the garden. The bonus was that because we spent so much time outside, we hardly noticed how small the house was.

Sadly, too often our back doors at home don't always open onto a sensuous wonderland of sun and scents, but instead lead straight to the dustbin, the coal hole and the washing line. Practical maybe, but not exactly soul inspiring.

Time for a rethink.

We all need fresh air and sunshine and no one said it was compulsory to run around in it. De-stress yourself. Relax outdoors.

It doesn't matter if you have a couple of hundred ancestral acres or a tiny back yard. Somewhere in it there should be a spot that catches the sun – probably where the cat always lies. Shift the cat out of the way and make your own arbour – even if it's only a seat and a few pots of something quick growing and sweet smelling.

Get the gardening down to a minimum, nothing complicated, nothing too labour intensive, just enough for a pleasant relaxing background. And then enjoy.

After all, most years we don't get that much sunshine in this country, so surely we're duty bound to make the most of it.

And don't forget that handy little shelf for the wine glass...

NE window shopping

COOK-OUT

MOST of us will be planning a barbecue for family or friends this month. And if you like your al fresco dining to be portable and mess-free, the George Foreman Carry It and Frill It might be the answer. The grill, which has a portable propane gas canister, can hold eight large burgers or chicken breasts and folds down into a compact carry case. The non-stick coated cooking surface can be wiped down after use.



Channels carry grease and fat into a separate tray. The grill costs £79.99. For stockists call 0845-658 9700.

RADIO DAYS

WITH 85 per cent of the population expected to receive the digital audio broadcasting signal this year, DAB is here to stay, and to celebrate this new era in radio, Roberts has launched its first DAB only portable radio. DAB offers a wide range of additional exclusive radio programmes that aren't available on analogue – BBC7, BBC Five Live Sports Extra, Planet Rock, Core, Primetime,



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ROMANTIC EVENINGS

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Heal's Mouse table £39, stacking chair £75; right: Asda garden pots and accessories - watering can £5.47, jug and barrel £1.96, bucket £1.55

A patio with personality

Outdoors shouldn't be any less stylish than indoors.

GABRIELLE FAGAN reports

PULL back the curtains and, if you dare, take a peek at the great outdoors. But don't panic if the sight of your patio or terrace doesn't make you smile. While it may be fashionable to talk of this area as an "outdoor room" - which in theory should be as stylish as indoor rooms - the reality is most of us ignore it most of the time. But there is still time to take it hand, boot out those sad pub-style plastic stackable chairs and turn it into a perfect spot for summer lounging and entertaining.

Identifying your patio's personality or your terrace's traits and matching your furniture and accessories to its style is the first step towards creating a successful outdoor area.

According to television gardener Gay Search, author of a new book, *The Impatient Gardener*, there are three types - romantic, formal or strictly modern.

ROMANTIC STYLE

BEST summed up as the traditional English cottage garden look, with curves and soft lines. Floor materials should be informal, with old bricks, gravel, or randomly laid paving slabs - sandstone's hardwearing and mellow. Complement the look with curved furniture in classic wood or rattan, and a profusion of terracotta or cast iron pots.

FURNITURE: Woolworths garden bench, £49.99; or the rattan Kim chair, £39, from the Pier. John Lewis, Colston table and chairs, £995.

ACCESSORIES: Pots from B&Q or check out containers from Dibor, Harrogate, with a cast-iron jardiniere, £65; enamelled wall planter, £9. It also has French style cafe furniture. Floral cushions, Ikea, and Cabbages & Roses.

TIP: Mix crazy paving with brick and



Contemporary garden bench, £49.99, from Woolworths

roofing tiles for an interesting floor. Break up expanses of plain paving by removing a few at random intervals and planting with spreading plants.

FORMAL STYLE

GEOMETRY and symmetry reign here. Lines are straight and angles square. Brick, stone slabs and gravel also feature but laid in regular patterns. There's room here for Eastern style furniture, and sleek white pots and a stunning water feature.

FURNITURE: Heal's Lombok range: a folding teak table, £295; Marks & Spencer's classic Suffolk collection: lounge, £199; table and four chairs, £599; Habitat's Citra range: teak and galvanised metal table, £195.

ACCESSORIES: Marks & Spencer whitewashed pots and birdbath, from £20. Heal's planters in black and polished steel, from £29.

TIP: Don't put up with a boring brown



fence, use a wood stain – there's a variety of colours available from pastels to black – to either make it a feature or make it blend in with the foliage.

STRICTLY MODERN STYLE

FLOOR materials which are textural and colourful such as slate, chippings or concrete can be dyed or polished. Decking is still a favourite, but if it leads off a wooden indoor floor ensure it is laid in the same direction to enhance the feeling of space.

Echo the look with slim, metal furniture, and symmetrical groups of metal pots.

FURNITURE: Heal's Mouse white metal table, £39, and chair, £75; John Lewis Vela table, £149, and chair, £79. Asda's Blenheim steel patio set, £87.96 for a glass-topped table, four chairs and black parasol.

ACCESSORIES: Asda's galvanised metal pots and a watering can. Three metallic pots, £2.42; 10 litre watering can, £5.47; £1.96 for a barrel and a bucket £1.55.

TIP: Industrial salvage like old wheels or stainless steel pipes can be a dramatic decoration in a pared-down setting.



- Asda:** www.asda.com or call 0500 100 055
- B&Q:** www.diy.com. It has a easy-build pergola and deck self-build kit, £648, included in its range of garden furniture, plus heaters for every setting.
- Cabbages & Roses:** 01225 859 151/www.cabbagesandroses.com
- Dibor:** 0870 0133 666/www.dibor.co.uk
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- Marks & Spencer:** 020 7268 1234/www.marksandspencer.com
- Woolworths:** 01706 862 789/www.woolworths.co.uk



GAY'S TIPS

GAY, whose book is full of ideas for rejuvenating neglected gardens and drab plots, says: "We live in an age of instant everything and want our gardens to become instant, social rooms. There are all sorts of ways of transforming an area quickly by using an eye-catching arrangement of stylish containers – to replanning and replanting with fast growing foliage and quick blooming plants. Alternatively, create an enclosed area by constructing a pergola, hung with hanging baskets over the patio and you'll probably never notice the wilderness beyond."

● The Impatient Gardener by Gay Search (Quadrille, £12.99)



The Pier outdoor furniture – Kim chair £44.95, ribbon stripe cushion £24.95; below left: Dibor French cafe furniture, from £69 for a chair

DOWN-TO-EARTH FACTS

IF you're building a patio, make it as large as possible, even in a small garden. With umbrellas and outside heaters, you may gain a dining and entertaining area to use throughout most of the year. Invest in outdoor lighting and add candles and flares for effect. For ultra-fashionable vintage-style garden accessories, such as wrought-iron jardinières and trellis panels, check out Marston & Langinger. Call: 020 7881 5717/www.marston-and-langinger.com

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Light relief

In a recent survey of the most desirable additions to a house, the conservatory came out very near the top. SARAH FRENCH meets a couple who say theirs has made a huge difference to their home life



A touch of glass: Eileen Pierpoint sees the light flood in to her conservatory

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THE test of a conservatory's success comes not so much on a warm sunny day, but when the weather's not so good and it's still a room you want to be in.

The conservatory at The Lodge at the entrance to Redworth Hall is, therefore, a triumph. With double glazing filling three sides, it makes maximum use of the light even on a dull afternoon, while its angular ceiling gives it a cosy feel.

When the black rain clouds finally disappear and the sun beams through the high, fan-shaped window, reflecting its pattern onto the pale laminate floor, the conservatory really comes into its own. Wilfred and Eileen Pierpoint had it added to their Victorian home seven years ago.

"The main living room which we use all the time was quite small so the idea of the conservatory was to add length and light to the room," explains Eileen.

"We've been very happy with it. It's made a tremendous difference to the room."

The conservatory is simply furnished with two cream leather armchairs and a glass table. The curtains are cream and a single plant provides some colour. "We chose everything deliberately to keep it as light as possible," says Eileen.

On a chillier day, the wood burner set into an inglenook fireplace in the older part of the room provides plenty of heat.

The Lodge, which was built as a gatehouse to the hall in 1890, has two reception rooms, a dining room, kitchen, utility room and downstairs shower room, four bedrooms, a main bathroom

and a sauna. The property is grade II listed, probably because of its connection to the hall which was once a school and is now a luxury hotel.

The Pierpoints extended the house first in 1992 before adding the conservatory, then four years later had a double garage with office space above built in the grounds, all making full use of Wilfred's skills as an architect.

While the conservatory can be clearly seen from the driveway leading to the hall, it is private as it's slightly sunken. People inside can see out but its aspect often means others can't see in.

It is built on a stone base that's in keeping with the rest of the house and has wooden window frames. The gable end is truncated to mirror the roof line adjoining the house – it's a necessary design feature as the roof had to fit below an existing window. A good covering of lichen on the rosemary clay tiles is already adding character.

Having lived at the Lodge for 14 years, the Pierpoints are now planning to leave County Durham and move south to Huddersfield so they can be nearer their son and daughter. Eileen says: "We've been very happy here and Wilfred has put a lot of himself into the house."

And come rain or shine, the conservatory is bound to be an attraction for its next owner.

● For more information, contact Robinson's estate agents, Duke Street, Darlington on 01325 484440.

Chameleon Mirrors is moving into the great outdoors. CHRISTEN PEARS reports



Where Buddha and the Venus de Milo meet



Mirror, mirror... Chameleon now has a vast array of goods for inside and out

If you thought garden ornaments were just about gnomes, a visit to Chameleon Exteriors will be a real eye-opener. Classical statues, leaping dolphins and oriental dragons all mingle together in the grounds. Sunlight plays on the jets of water spouting from a huge, three-tiered fountain.

The company has sourced items from around the world, particularly the Far East. Fountains made in abstract shapes sit next to statues of Buddha, replicas of the Venus de Milo next to a giant eagle. There's even a mini version of Niagara Falls.

Although there's something for every garden, the scale of many of the fountains, statues and water features make them perfect for the region's largest and grandest homes.

Chameleon Exteriors is set in the grounds of Chameleon Mirrors, based in the Team Valley at Gateshead. As well as launching the exteriors side of



the business, the company has just unveiled its new showroom. Spread over 6,600 sq feet and two floors, it is twice as big as before.

The expansion is the latest chapter in the success story of company, which began almost 20 years ago selling printed mirrors from a warehouse on Newcastle Quayside. It now employs 27 staff, manufactures a wide range of products and sells everything from mirrors and prints to lamps and general bric-a-brac.

"When we first began we just added some things to help display the mirrors better," explains Heather Matthews, Chameleon's financial director. "There was such interest that we just kept adding more and more things. The new showroom will highlight just about everything you can have in glass from table ornaments to stunning bathroom items."

Chameleon Mirrors, Unit 1, Dalesway, Team Valley Trading Estate (0191-482 6660)

Chameleon Mirrors, Unit 1, Dalesway, Team Valley Trading Estate (0191-482 6660)

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NE interiors



The dining room is light and modern with wooden floors and crystal chandeliers
Pictures: RICHARD DOUGHTY

Priests, ghosts and now guests

It's not so much skeletons in the closet as skeletons under the floors at a hotel in Ripon that combines an ancient past with contemporary service. SARAH FRENCH investigates

OF all the guests who come to stay at the Old Deanery Hotel in Ripon, two will rest there permanently. "This is where Henry lies," explains general manager Linda Mercer. "He was quite cute really and we got quite attached to him because he was exposed for so long."

In more ways than one, it seems. "He was lying with his hands over his thingy. I named him Henry because he looked like a Henry. We think he'd been there since the 1300s."

Linda's introduction to one of her more quiet guests comes about as she explains how construction of an extension to the Old Deanery had to be put on hold for six months while archaeologists painstakingly examined the remains below.

"We had to do it and it was fascinating, but there's no funding for it. Then we had to build a floating platform above so as not to disturb the burial ground. It cost around an extra £20,000."

The renovations mean that three rooms on the third floor can now be accessed by a new staircase. The original external wall has been retained as open stonework inside to give added character.

Linda continues: "Over near the window someone else was sticking out. The archaeologists spent ages digging with small trowels and brushing off the soil. The whole area was fenced off to protect the site and for safety. We called him Bert. But after one weekend we came back and Bert's head was gone. Either someone had got in and stolen it or a dog had dug it up."

As well as Bert and Henry, the bones of 11 infants were found, all dating to the 14th century. Their remains may have been underground but it seems their spirits may live on in the hotel. Ghostbusters who were

brought in following the refurbishment of the building detected movement in a number of rooms.

The Old Deanery was built in 1625, in the shadow of Ripon Cathedral.

"I've done some research on the building and we believe it was built on the site of the monastery of St Wilfred. Then it seems that in the 17th century, it was a centre for trainee priests," explains Linda.

Originally, the building was an H-shape, with two long corridors joined at the centre. The large bay windows at the front and back overlooking the gardens were installed by the Victorians.

Lewis Carroll is believed to have spent time here during the mid-19th century and, during the Second World War, it was occupied by the military. The previous leaseholders found evidence of the soldiers' billet, including helmets and cigarette packets.

The Old Deanery continued in a number of guises, firstly as a restaurant, up to about ten years ago, then as a coffee shop and restaurant with three bedrooms. This is its first venture as a hotel and brings an unexpected contemporary touch to the cathedral city.

The building is still owned by the Church and leased to the partners behind the refurbishment, the owners of Ripon-based printer repair company Express Terminals Ltd, Peter and Linda Whitehouse and Rachel and John Heath-Smith.

Work began in 2001. For Linda, a former general manager of Swinton Castle, the opportunity to project manage her own hotel conversion was a dream come true. "Normally the general manager just turns up and runs the place once all the work is

Continued on page 10



FROM TOP: the Old Deanery, fully restored from wreck to country house hotel; the decadent purple sofa in Room 2 is very 2004, as is the contemporary four-poster bed

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The bar area has a contemporary feel with wood, stainless steel and leather finishes. Below left: a free-standing bath in one of the well-equipped bathrooms

done. It was a great chance to work on the design and to see it all through to the end," she says.

Three years ago, the grade II red star listed building was in a terrible state. "It was crumbling and it was very sad to see the deterioration. The internal walls were held up by steel supports and there was no electricity. Over the years, stone chimneys had been built onto the building's original timber structure and it just wasn't strong enough to hold them.

"Squirrels and pigeons were living on the top floor, but that's my favourite part of the whole refurbishment because it has slanted ceilings and it's such a transformation from what it was.

"The whole building really needed some major investment. We were awarded small grants by English Heritage and Yorkshire Forward but they were a drop in the ocean," says Linda.

£1.2m later, including £300,000 just to make the structure sound again, the hotel's 11 individual rooms and restaurant are open to guests.

"Now it's all done, it's certainly been worthwhile. Sometimes I still can't believe how far we've come," says Linda, who was able to indulge her love of interior design in the bedrooms and public areas.

"The design of the original building was very simple, very square with no ornate features. They had large windows, massive open fires and would have had large, long tables. We've tried to reflect the simplicity in the refurbishment so that the interior complements the building itself, albeit in very much a 21st century contemporary way. We wanted to offer visitors to Ripon and local people something different."

So, in Room 2, for example, the original

shutters have been restored and there's a clawfoot bath and four poster bed but the styling is contemporary and the decadent purple sofa is definitely 2004.

Room 16 has a gothic feel in the bathroom where the original panelling has been retained, but the bath that's big enough for two has ingenious green glass doors that pull around to create a shower screen.

Linda describes her favourite, Room 9, as a bachelor pad, with its black leather bed and sofa. By contrast, Room 5 is a romantic love nest, with dimmer lights fitted in the en suite bathroom to create mood. The room's focal point is the bed with its illuminated canopy and bronze coloured iron bedstead of birds and bees, bought from Church Reproductions in Ripon.

"The beds were the most important pieces for me," says Linda. "They're very contemporary, big and comfortable. There's a mix of chrome, leather and iron."

Most of the furniture is oak or mellow pine, while the colour schemes are muted. The same pale green carpet runs throughout. "I love sludgy colours," says Linda.

She chose all the furnishings herself. "Some things I saw and liked and thought about where to put them later, other pieces I bought for specific rooms. It was quite difficult imagining the rooms when there was no paint on the walls but when everything arrived it all seemed to fit together very well. I'm pleased with the overall result."

The contemporary look continues in the public areas. The bar and lounges are of stainless steel, glass and black leather and overlook the gardens where a willow weeps onto the lawns, perfect for wedding photos - the hotel is licensed for civil ceremonies.

It's pleasant and airy in summer with real fires to make it cosy in winter.

In the two dining rooms the colours are neutral, the tables simple but with quirky slanting water jugs and high backed bowls for character.

Head chef Barrie Higginbotham, formerly of the Foresters Arms at Carlton in Coverdale, is renowned for sourcing the best local ingredients which he translates into dishes like monkfish with broad beans and pancetta and roast rack of Nidderdale lamb on a mushroom and bean cassoulet.

The restaurant is open all day and there is regular entertainment, from champagne-tasting and tapas evenings to traditional and Latin jazz nights twice a month.

And if all that wasn't enough, guests can have personal guided tours of the Cathedral across the road by the Dean himself.



"We've tried to reflect the simplicity in the refurbishment so that the interior complements the building itself..."

● The Old Deanery Hotel and Restaurant, Minster Road, Ripon. To book rooms or restaurant reservations, call 01765 600003 or visit www.theolddeanery.co.uk



Prickly plants can help if you want to make that cat scat and take up residence elsewhere

GOOD ENOUGH TO EAT

Storing beetroot

BEETROOT harvesting usually runs from early summer to mid-autumn, although it can be harvested at any stage of growth, depending on the size of the beets required. To store beetroot, place it in a wooden box laid in a bed of loose straw or sand and cover it with straw or sand.

The box should be placed in a cool, dry, frost-free area such as a garage. The length of time it can be stored will depend on the type and also the conditions within the store, but generally it should survive for a few months in reasonable shape.

Although the round beet is the most common to grow, other shapes such as oval, flat and oblong are also available. And while red is the most popular colour, there are

also golden varieties such as 'Burpee's Golden' and white ones. The leaves are also edible, tasting similar to spinach.



THREE WAYS TO...

Get the best from ornamental grasses

1. Grow them in full sun, in drier, less fertile soils
2. Leave the foliage over the winter to protect the crown of the plant. They should only need an annual tidy-up to keep them in shape.
3. In late winter, before growth begins, cut back all the old growth to near ground level with secateurs.

How to stop moggie mayhem

A recent survey by Gardening Which?, the Consumers' Association magazine, found that some 84 per cent of people have at least one cat-related problem in their garden. HANNAH STEPHENSON reports

ONE of my neighbours, who recently spent a lot of money at the garden centre on new plants, was horrified to find that a lot of them wilted and died when the local cats used her newly-dug bed as a litter tray.

Not only do cats use bare soil as a toilet, but they also flatten plants and seedlings, raid birds' nests and use trees and shrubs as scratching posts.

So, how can we stop nuisance moggies doing their worst this summer?

- Firstly you need to try to stop them getting in. Block your boundary gaps with prickly plants or prunings such as holly.
- Fit wire or string 10-15cm above the top of fences to make it difficult for cats to balance on them.
- Don't leave exposed soil in borders. Instead, mulch with stone chipping or pebbles.
- Wrap tree guards or fine chicken wire around the base of tree trunks to stop cats using them to scratch on.
- Cover ponds with netting to stop cats diminishing your fish supplies and position bird feeds in a clear area of the garden where they will be inaccessible to cats.
- Try fitting a squirrel baffle (downward opening cone or biscuit tin) to the posts of bird tables to stop cats climbing up them.

Researchers at Gardening Which? tested a number of cat repellents on the market, including chemical granules, liquids, powders and ultrasonic devices including a motion-activated battery-powered sprinkler called a Scarecrow and a Cat & Dog Repeller, whose sensor detects movement and heat and triggers a burst of

variable ultrasound said to deter dogs, foxes and cats.

The GW team came up with the following verdict: "None of the branded deterrents we tried worked for everyone but the ultrasonic devices and the Scarecrow were the most successful. Of these, the Cat & Dog Repeller is the cheapest. To conserve battery life, try to position it where the movement sensor won't pick up a lot of non-cat movement such as people or traffic. Alternatively, dispense with batteries and use it with a mains adapter. Or stick to using low-tech netting and twigs to protect seed beds."

Whatever method you choose, clear away any evidence of fouling first, as this acts as a magnet for more cats and more fouling.

Julia Boulton, editor of Gardening Which?, says: "In my own garden I fill every scrap of soil with plants and never feed birds on the ground. I find these approaches work for me."

- The full report is in the July issue of Gardening Which? For details phone 0800 920106 or go online at www.which.net/gardeningwhich.

None of the branded deterrents we tried worked for everyone but the ultrasonic devices and the Scarecrow were the most successful

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Gardening Correspondent BRIGID PRESS is impressed by the community allotment at Blackhall Colliery



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What a plot!

Location: Blackhall Community Allotment, Blackhall Colliery
Age of garden: Opened mid August 2003
Size: 20m x 40m
Number of users: 69
Most used tool: hoe

ONCE you pull off the A19, the drive down into Blackhall winds its way through some beautiful countryside. The trees that line the road are stately, mature and statuesque, gaps in the stout hedges reveal fields full of dancing red poppies, and there are lay-by signs advertising freshly grown organic vegetables for sale. If you didn't know any better, you could be in the film set of a gentle but intriguing, plot twisting, village murder mystery television series that gets solved by the two elderly ladies who make the cricket teas.

The next bend in the road, though, completely throws the compass out of orientation as it opens up a panoramic view of the Durham coastline with the blue waters of the North Sea melting into the summer skyline.

Blackhall community allotment is found at the bottom of Eleventh Street, off the coast road, and is easily recognised by the neat row of brand new tanalised fence boards that secure the plot. The first thing that strikes you as you step out of the car is just how quiet the area is. There is an air of peace, calm and tranquillity about the place. Between the gaps in the fence panelling, you catch disjointed glimpses of people bending down and toiling on the land.

Unless you are a member of the community allotments you will have to shout over or through the gate for someone to let you in. They all have a key to the security lock, which means that only those who actually work on the land can gain

access to it. So far it has kept damage and vandalism away from the site (apart from one cabbage that mysteriously disappeared last month), and this helps to sustain motivation and retain ownership.

Once through the gates, though, the beauty and solitude of the site really grab you. It is set into a gently sloping hill that looks over the headland into the sea. The sun sends its rays directly into the allotment for the whole of its journey across the sky, which makes this an excellent suntrap. An array of carefully placed benches bear testimony to the sunbathing qualities of the garden.

At any one time throughout the day there can usually be found a handful of 'volunteers' steadily tending the land. There is a series of plots 'owned' by a variety of groups and individuals from the immediate area. Some have been allotment owners before, but have found the larger expanses just too much to cope with. Some bring the children down on a regular family outing, and then there are the groups, such as the local primary school, the youth club and the Prince's Trust teams that have adopted their own spaces.

The fruits of their labour are glaringly obvious. Plots are filled with rows and rows of the healthiest looking potato greenery. Long, luscious onion stems stand proudly next to the stiffly upright leeks. Feathery heads of carrot foliage vie for attention with the purple-stained leaves of the beetroot. Tomatoes are already swelling on the stems of the properly pinched-out plants and sunflowers cling to every fence, ready to jump up and spread their contagious yellow happiness to all around.

There are one or two areas that look as though the users haven't been down for some time. There is usually a reason for this, illness or holiday, but the rest of the 'volunteers' often assist with keeping empty or underused plots going. They take



Clockwise from top left: the log book; a beautiful rose grown at the allotment; Brigid Press takes a rest from her labours; a spot of hard digging in the vegetable patch
Pictures: BRIAN CLOUGH

a pride in not just their sections looking good, but the whole site looking good. They also help each other out by passing on knowledge and tips. It is not a closed shop, as some allotments can feel like, with each holder trying to out-compete the other. Here the skilled encourage the novices.

The greenhouse that stands at the bottom of the garden is filled with more tomatoes and a harvest of onions that were sown at the end of last year. The potting bench is home to box files which contain seeds, information on how to grow them and a log book. It was the log book that caught my attention. It is used by those who work the allotment to jot down anything that they might want to bring to the attention of anyone else. If George had watered Alan's onions, then he would let him know by writing it down in the book. If Trish had spare leeks, she would offer them around by noting so in the book. I also took great delight in reading lines like "I didn't come down to do any work today, but just for a few moments of peace and quiet". I suppose it works along similar lines to an Internet chat room, but in a greenhouse and on paper.

The community allotments are a testimony to the need for simple, safe havens where ordinary people can tend to a small piece of land, growing a range of fruit, vegetables and flowers in the manner that they want to. It is not just about providing food for the table, but creating a socially interactive environment with the added benefits of physical exertion and mental relaxation.



The beauty and solitude of the site really grab you. It is set into a gently sloping hill that looks over the headland into the sea

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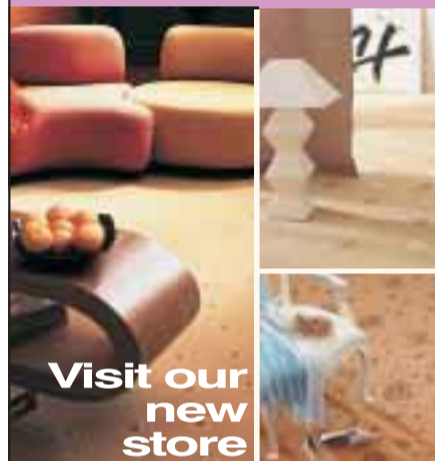



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me and my wardrobe



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: Top and belt from Hennes, Diesel jeans, Tesco sandals; jeans made from a skirt, Wrangler boots found in a ballet shop in Middlesbrough, Vintage Topshop dress; top and shoes from Topshop, skirt from a second hand shop in Scotland, Hennes belt



I find that I spend most of my time in second hand shops so I don't ever spend huge amounts

Pictures: STUART BOULTON

Fashion designer Kate Fearnley has an eclectic style that combines high street and vintage clothes. The 27-year-old set up her own business in Billingham in 2002, winning the Tees Valley New Business Awards in the same year. Her clothes are available in independent stores across the North and already have a huge following in Manchester and Liverpool. Former Brookside actress, and winner of Hell's Kitchen, Jennifer Ellison, is a fan.

How would you describe your look?

I don't have one particular look. It's a mixture of things that make me feel comfortable and something that's interesting. I mix all kinds of things – vintage, second hand, high street and sometimes designer clothes.

What's your favourite item of clothing?

It's probably a black and silver vintage dress from Topshop. It was handed down from my auntie. I've had it for years and I wear it all the time.

What's your worst buy?

It's something from years ago – psychedelic leggings and a psychedelic top. When I look back at it, it's revolting but at the time it was the in-thing.

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

I don't really have anything I've spent a lot of

money on. I find that I spend most of my time in second hand shops so I don't ever spend huge amounts.

What are your favourite shops?

It changes all the time. Sometimes I'll be in the mood for second hand shops, sometimes I'll directly to Topshop because they've always got great gear. Sometimes, if I want a nice pair of jeans, I'll go to designer shops.

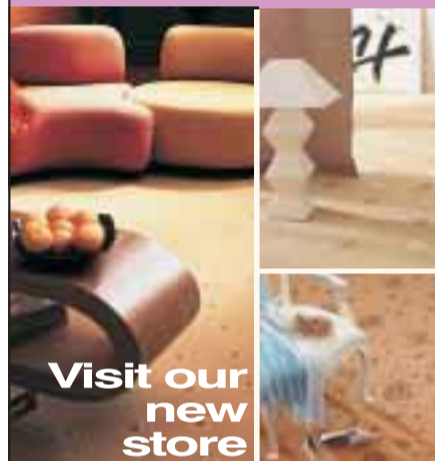
Which celebrity's style do you admire and why?

It would be someone like Helena Christensen or Kate Moss because they have a mixture of clothes from designer, vintage and high street shops and they create their own style. It not necessarily bought off the rack.

● Kate Fearnley can be contacted on (01642) 370609.



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● Kate Fearnley can be contacted on (01642) 370609.

NE out on the town

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



TERRY WAYMAN



JAMES FLETCHER



LIAM TAYLOR



SAMANTHA JONES

McCourt & McKay

THE MOBY GRAPE, STOCKTON

THE Moby Grape enjoys panoramic views overlooking the riverside. It is stylishly decorated and appeals to the younger trendy Stockton scene. On a Monday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday the downstairs club offers dance grooves – funky house on a Saturday, DJ Munro on a Monday and Friday and Brit tunes from 94-2004 on Thursday. The Stockton Riverside festival was on so we popped in on a Sunday as Will Young's voice filled the air outside. We soon got chatting to a group who looked very much at home there and who had managed that "casual yet thought about their image" look.

LIAM TAYLOR

THE 20-year-old student of graphic design at Newcastle University confesses he also is very interested in fashion. When he is not at uni, he likes to catch up with his friends at the Moby Grape. Liam usually finds his favourite buys at second hand shops and likes to jazz up a boring outfit with accessories. We thought the rosary beads looked really good and Liam also had a great haircut from his auntie's salon, Holga's in Middlesbrough. The shirt Liam wore was from Toast, jeans from Union in Newcastle. Liam doesn't have to worry about his weight as he is naturally slim but he does advocate drinking lots of water.

RACHEL KELLY

THE 20-year-old student socialises in The Moby Grape because of its friendly atmosphere. Rachel likes to shop in high street shops like Top Shop and River Island because they are trendy and affordable. Her jeans and bag were from River Island, her top from Top Shop and shoes from Dorothy Perkins. Rachel's favourite must-haves are a pair of GHD hair straighteners and a pack of instant tan wipes. She is also very disciplined in cleansing, toning and moisturising every night.

RACHEL KELLY

JAMES FLETCHER

THE 19-year-old student works at the Moby Grape as a bar man. He thinks the music is very cool and the fact that it's so friendly makes it a pleasure

HOLLY BANNATYNE

to work here. James is a student at Leeds and likes to shop there. His T-shirt is from Yakuza in Middlesbrough, the retro jacket from Blue Rinse and Levi jeans from WRC at Leeds. James radiated good health – the only thing he could put it down too was drinking lots of water.

TERRY WAYMAN

The 20-year-old bar manager at the Moby Grape likes working and socialising here. Terry is precise when it comes to grooming – he thinks nothing of splashing out on costly Creme de la Mer moisturiser, Clinique body wash, won't use anything other than GHD straighteners and regularly applies a facial scrub. Where fashion is concerned Terry likes to mix and match. His favourite shops are Zara – a personal favourite of ours too – H&M, Psyche and Triads. Terry was wearing jeans from H&M and a T-shirt from Zara.

HOLLY BANNATYNE

THE 18-year-old sales assistant used to work here but now enjoys meeting her mates here. Holly had a gorgeous skirt on from Toast in Middlesbrough with a fine wool vest top from H&M. Her flip flops were from Miss Selfridge. Holly likes the affordable variety you can get from shops like H&M and Top Shop. One thing that really stood out with Holly was her radiant skin. She uses Nivea Satin Sheen and a No7 Bronzer.

● Judie McCourt, a presenter on Century FM, and make-up and hair artist Allison McKay, run AM Creative Productions, which specialises in creative event management and the production of photographic images for advertising

amcreativeproductions.com

SAMANTHA JONES

THE 22-year-old works and socialises at the Moby Grape, but is also a student of textiles. Samantha loves designing and making outfits for her friends and is looking at gaining some commission work from local designer shops. She got her jeans from her sister, then ripped them to create a one-off fashionable look. Samantha likes to shop in second hand shops and then redesign the outfit herself, mixing fashionable looks with urban wear. We loved Samantha's necklace, a charity shop buy. She looked fab. Her tip for looking radiant was simply "be happy".

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NE shopping LINTHORPE ROAD



Linthorpe Road has an eclectic mix of shops, both designer and discount, as CHRISTEN PEARS discovers

A QUICK glance down Linthorpe Road reveals nothing out of the ordinary – a few takeaways, some discount furniture stores and one or two boarded up shop fronts. But take the time to wander down the street and you'll be surprised by the variety of shops you encounter.

In the centre of Middlesbrough, Linthorpe Road is characterised by its extremes. On one hand, there's the bargain hunter's paradise, Your More Store, and on the opposite side of the road, Kwiksave. Just a few doors up, however, is Psyche, the jewel in the Linthorpe Road's crown.

Much attention has been focused on the designer department store since it opened in the former Uptons last year. With its own hair and beauty stylists and champagne and oyster bar, it's been hailed the North-East's answer to Harvey Nichols.

The red brick, art deco building is home to all the big names: Burberry, Armani, Vivienne Westwood, Nicole Farhi and Patrick Cox, as well as more casual labels such as Duffer, Diesel and Punk Royal. On the ground floor, there's a department devoted to tailoring, but there's more to Psyche than clothing. The store has a homeware department, boasting, among other things, an impressive range of Alessi products. There's even an art gallery.

Psyche is at the centre of a shopping revolution in Linthorpe Road, which has seen a number of upmarket outlets open their doors, including designer fashion stores, jewellery designers, fashionable hair stylists and a growing selection of pubs and restaurants.

They have joined rather than replaced the existing traders, creating a blend of modern and traditional. Long-established family firms sit alongside national chains and traditional greengrocers rub shoulders with cutting edge designer boutiques.

There's everything from the Mike Nutter discount golf store to bridal wear at Laura Day. Leather lovers should make their way to the Moda & Pelle leather outlet and if it's jewellery you're after, there's a branch of Market Cross Jewellers.

Toast is one of the newest additions to the street, opening its doors in April. It sells a wide range of vintage clothing, largely from America, as well as customwear and designs by local students. There are vests, jackets, dresses T-shirts, bags and a fabulous collection of cowboy boots, tipped to be a big thing for autumn/winter.



The store is the brainchild of Shiplo Zaman. "I wanted to do something new and liven up this town. I wanted to give it something for people with less money who want to dress well," he says.

A few doors down, Deep also sells vintage clothes, while Gravity and Red Square cater for the young and trendy market. Bliss and Nicola Russell specialise in ladies' designer clothes. At this time of year, the dummies in the windows are clad in floating chiffons and pretty pastels.

As befits Middlesbrough's multicultural mix, Sunny Continental Foods sells an impressive range of foodstuffs. The shelves are piled high with olives, pasta, rice and oils from the Middle East, Turkey, Italy and Greece among others.

Mulcaster and Hyde specialises in furniture from the Orient – a selection of chairs, tables, benches and cupboards made from lovely, dark teak and mahogany.

The store is owned by Chris Mulcaster, who spent seven years working in South East Asia. A lot of the furniture is manufactured in central Java.

He says: "When I came back here, I looked for this sort of thing but there was very little and what there was far too expensive. We're just whetting people's palates. They were seduced by pine and they're tired of that now. They're looking for something else."

Linthorpe Road is also gaining a reputation for its fine food and drink. Restaurants, cafes and smart new pubs line the street.. Much of the road is pedestrianised and in the fine weather, some of the cafes spill out onto the pavement, creating a cosmopolitan feel.

That's the thing about Linthorpe Road. You're never quite sure what you'll find.

I wanted to give the town something for people with less money who want to dress well



LIFE COACH

SUMMER FUN:
VACATE YOUR MIND

IT'S time to get away, unwind, have fun and re-charge. At least that's the idea isn't it? But do you really switch off or are your suitcases not the only things you are carrying with you on holiday this year?



You might have heard the saying "healthy body, healthy mind". It is vital for our wellbeing that we take time out and really switch off from our everyday lives. It doesn't really matter where you go; if you can't switch off your worries, no amount of luxury holidays will revitalise you. To truly re-charge, you need to empty your mind of everyday worries. We can take life, and ourselves, far too seriously sometimes.

So to truly have fun in the sun, try leaving your troubles behind. Imagine packing everything you are worried about in a suitcase and leaving it behind as you go away. It'll all still be there when you get back but the difference is you will be in a much better place to deal with it. Happy holidays!

Juliette Lee

E-mail: juliette@sunflowercoaching.com;
www.sunflowercoaching.com; tel: (01748) 823010



Clockwise from top left: the interior of Mulcaster and Hyde; the label and lifestyle store Psyche; a view down Linthorpe Road; Toast

Pictures: CHRIS BOOTH



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gadget man

A little bit of water music



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

Right: the Soundwaves MP3 player



A BRITISH student has invented a revolutionary underwater MP3 player called Soundwaves – that can play your favourite tunes beneath the sea or at the pool.

Showcased at this year's Design Show at Brunel University, the underwater aid picked up an AOL Broadband Innovator Award and Sam James, who is based in Cardiff, is set to become the next Welsh design success story.

Soundwaves uses advanced "bone conduction" technology, which when placed on both temples allows sound to be heard "inside the user's head" in all conditions, including when fully immersed. This allows users to listen to music with unrivalled clarity. Vibrations from the MP3 device are passed safely through the skull to the inner ear, completely bypassing the outer ear.

Simply clicking the stylish MP3 device onto a set of swimming goggles, Soundwaves, which was created in conjunction with a commercial firm called Newlands Scientific, will contain at least 128Mb of memory, providing swimmers with several hours worth of underwater music entertainment.

Outlining his reasons for developing Soundwaves, Sam said: "Swimming is a great form of exercise, and many of us will be heading to pools for a cool down or for a workout. We all know that swimming can be quite tedious – swimming up and down can become monotonous, but with the device it'll hopefully be a lot more enjoyable." Paul Turnock, design director at Brunel University's Department of Design comments: "I'm sure this amazing design will be immensely popular with both recreational and serious swimmers alike."

It's a contact game

A HIGH-tech soccer shirt could help England wonderboy Wayne Rooney keep his cool when the new season starts.

Design student David Evans has created the state-of-the-art jersey which means managers like Sven-Goran Eriksson can monitor players on the pitch and substitute them if their heart rate and hydration

levels plunge. The shirt uses ECG sensors to record the electrical activity of the heart and send signals to a computer on the team bench. Any worries can be instantly spotted by coaches and physios – highlighting any abnormal heart rhythms or low hydration.

Silicon gel-based strips are connected to the top of the players' backs and react to sweat loss to monitor hydration levels. Low levels often mean a player is fatigued or dehydrated and could need to be substituted.

A sensor on the shirtsleeve also allows the bench to communicate with players out on the pitch by sending radio waves to a transmitter that gives off a small vibration and alerts the player to look towards the dug-out when necessary.

The information is sent back to a laptop or PDA hand-held computer in the dug-out via a small radio-frequency communication panel at the bottom of the shirt. It allows the bench to monitor the entire team or select individual players for attention.

The shirt is made from electro-textile materials and can be easily washed.

The design has already received interest from sports manufacturers and David, 23, from Woodley, Cheshire, hopes it will be picked up and put into production ready for the 2006 World Cup.

Nigel Burton



David Evans tests out the jersey



Dream job: Cath Wadsworth outside her sweet shop

Chocs away

SARAH FRENCH visits a chocoholics' paradise

LIKE most little girls, Cath Wadsworth loved playing shops with paper money and goods borrowed from her mum's pantry.

But whereas little girls grow up and swap playing shops for simply shopping, Cath never went off her favourite game. "I grew up still wanting to be a shopkeeper," she says. So now she's got her own, she's like a kid in a sweet shop – only with her latest venture that means literally.

Cath opened the stylish Serendipity interiors and gifts shop with its popular tearoom in the Market Place in Leyburn, North Yorkshire, four years ago, having moved from another location in the town.

Now she's expanded into the little shop next door to launch Sweet Serendipity chocolates and confectionery. It's full of old favourites, new treats and the Leonidas range of luxury chocolates, brought straight to Leyburn from Belgium.

Everyone has to sacrifice something in business and for Cath it's been her figure. "I was looking for excellent chocolate and a wide choice at a good price so, of course, we had to try different ones," she reveals.

Leonidas, sold in shops like Harrods, comes in at least 60 varieties of dark, milk and white chocolate, ranging from bite-size to ones that must be eaten in moderation. "We did have some even bigger ones but we ate them all," laughs Cath.

The chocolates come in gift boxes ranging in price from £5.50 to £25; there's a blue velvet box with lift-up lid and drawer below (filled with more chocolates, of course) for £8.50 and an even bigger one in red satin for £18.50. Or it's possible to just buy one or two in a bag or tiny gift box.

"One lady bought two in a box to give to her husband after his lunch, which I thought was really nice," says Cath, who owns the shop with her partner Adrian Walton.

The range of confectionery covers just about every good make of chocolate there is including Green & Black's, Charbonnel & Walker, Lindt, Café Tessa in bags, bars and gift sets, boxes of Whitakers from Skipton and Ackermans bars, which boast 99 per cent cocoa.

But it's not all sheer indulgence. There's even chocolate with healthy overtones – New Tree makes 'aromatherapy' chocolate bars containing lavender and orange for relaxation, lemon for digestion and the antioxidants in blackcurrant for youthfulness. Whether they outweigh the calories in the chocolate is doubtful, but any excuse to eat more has to be worth it.

If New Tree isn't healthy enough there is always Jonas Bottomley's mint rock for "health and nutrition", or Jakemans throat and chest sweets. These goodies are part of a range of traditional sweets that includes coltsfoot rock, cinder toffee, sugared almonds, peanut brittle, Kendal mint cake and Uncle Joe's mint balls.

For big kids there are 150g bags of jelly babies, dolly mixture, Pontefract cakes, aniseed balls, midget gems and the like, while the children's section includes marshmallow lollies, candy walking sticks and chocolate in the shape of anything from CDs, mobile phones and aeroplanes to mice, bees, parrots, turtles and fish.

For more sophisticated tastes there are Droste Pastilles, Hazer Baba Turkish delight, Anthon Berg, Belgian nougat, Niederegger marzipan from Germany and Quiggins marzipan "enrobed in white chocolate" from Kendal.

The shop is pretty much chocca with choc but Cath says the range will change as the staff respond to customers' requests.

"Everyone has their favourite chocolate and we have most here so customers can try different things," says Cath. "As it's such early days we're keen to hear about any particular sweets that people would like us to sell – customers have already asked for diabetic chocolate, apricot chocolates and chocolates with whole cherries inside, so we'll be trying to get hold of those.

"It's something new for Leyburn which we hope will appeal to local people as well as to visitors," says Cath. "After all, everyone loves chocolate don't they?"

● Sweet Serendipity, Market Place, Leyburn, is open from 10am-5pm seven days a week, telephone (01969) 625005.

EATING OUT

HOLLATHAN'S, DURHAM

IF you're shopping in Durham and fancy a relaxed bistro-style lunch while you watch the world go by, Hollathan's is the place to be. Situated on the edge of Elvet Bridge, it's right in the heart of the city, perfectly placed for a spot of people-watching – students, tourists, shoppers, label lovers determined to spend lots of money in Van Mildert across the road...

There are all the comforts the coffee addict needs in the bistro – a rack full of newspapers and magazines and squidgy leather sofas – and a tempting range of bistro-style food.

From a menu which included pastas, risottos, wraps and flour tortillas with chicken, steak, cheese, salsas and salads, I chose the mussels and chunky chips (£9.99), which were delicious. The mussels were perfectly cooked in a creamy wine and onion sauce and the chips were certainly very chunky. My partner chose a Hollathan's 6oz burger, home-made with 100 per cent beef. It was tasty and juicy – McDonald's eat your heart out! If you're out and about a bit earlier, there's a Durham Big Breakfast on offer, scrambled or fried eggs with smoke bacon, sausages, black pudding and mushrooms.

Downstairs is Sorrento's bistro, a cave-like restaurant which is the perfect cocoon for supper with friends in the evening.

Manager Nick Anderson, who has been



Plump sofas: perfect for chilling out

at Hollathan's for six years, says the name of the café bar was created by owner Keith Willcock from an amalgam of his children's names, Holly and Nathan. "We appeal to a fairly cosmopolitan crowd," says Nick. Two more branches will be opening at the end of September, in Sunderland and Chester-le-Street, and they have also taken over the Spotted Dog pub at High Coniscliffe, just west of Darlington.

Hollathan's is linking up with local shops to offer ten per cent discounts to customers in a free membership scheme.

Jenny Needham

● Hollathan's, 16-17 Elvet Bridge, Durham DH1 3AA (0191 386 4618), www.hollathans.com.

The Northern Echo

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NE connections

Hall by the Wall

JENNY NEEDHAM and partner chill out in Northumberland for the weekend

NORTHUMBERLAND, for all its beauty, can be wild and woolly at times. Throughout history, the border county has been the scene of many skirmishes as, down the centuries, marauding bands of Romans and reivers and Scottish and English armies clashed swords. After an afternoon spent at Vindolanda Roman fort, surveying Hadrian's amazing wall and contemplating the bellicose past of the region, peace was needed. And peace we found... down Military Road.

Past imposing stone pillars, down a little country road just ten miles from the fort, a large house comes into view, surrounded by parkland. In front is a golf course, dotted with little figures, marking cards, playing shots, searching for balls.

The magnificent gothic house was built in 1823, and after several incarnations, one as a Leonard Cheshire Home, finally emerged as the Matfen Hall Hotel in 1999. As you wander round, it becomes obvious that this is a tale of two halves: old and new.

The old half of the hotel has been the ancestral home of the Blackett family since 1830, a prominent North-East family descended from Sir William Blackett. Sir William was granted a baronetcy by Charles II in 1673 for his support during the Civil War.

In the 1990s Sir Hugh and Lady Blackett restored the hall into a 31 bedroom hotel, and they haven't stopped since, perfecting and expanding the business into the stunning country house hotel it is today.

In the old part, the decor is ornate, though not overdone, with tapestry, deep colours, landscapes in oil and old prints. In the drawing room you can sit with a brandy and imagine what it would have been like to hold a house party in such a setting.

The bedroom ceilings are high, the windows on a grand scale. In ours there was a window seat and stunning view over the golf course to a solitary swan gliding round the little lake. The bath, too, was on a grand scale.

The landing outside our bedroom overlooked the Great Hall where a wedding party was taking place. Grand and gothic, with a huge fireplace and dark wood staircase down which the bride and bridesmaids glide (hopefully) to join the guests, it's a perfect setting.

The new half of the hotel has only just been completed, a £4½m development which includes another 22 bedrooms and extensive spa and leisure facilities. Lady Blackett, who oversaw the interior design, has chosen a modern palette of calming neutrals for the leisure areas and the new bedrooms.

An open courtyard has been given a glass roof and now houses a swimming pool, there's a gym – much used by non-residents – with equipment that is so high-tech it almost does the exercises for you, an aerobics and spinning studio, and relaxing beauty therapy rooms, where my partner and I tried out two of their all Italian treatments.

I enjoyed a luxurious Versace facial. Matfen Hall spa is the first in the country to offer the Versace range of treatments. The facial comprised a cleanse, exfoliate, tone and moisturise routine, with a soothing back, arm and hand pressure points massage and with Versace products, which all include soothing aloe, and

whew, the sort you get in cheese. "It was noticed that cheesemakers who had their hands in whey daily had extraordinarily smooth skin, so it was adapted for use in the Versace products," says the therapist.

My partner meanwhile was drifting off to somewhere much more exotic with a hot stone massage. I know this because we were being pampered side by side in the his'n'hers double treatment room (which would also be great if you go with mum or a friend). The stones are basalt from Mexico, warmed through with hot water and used, together with therapeutic essential oils, for massaging the back. The heat enables the massage to reach more deeply into the tissues and is hugely relaxing according to my partner, who was so chilled out he could barely string a sentence together for some time afterwards.

The treatment tables are hugely comfortable, with gaps for the nose if you're face down, and they're heated to stop any chills sneaking in.

Meals at Matfen are taken in the Library and Print Room restaurants. Service was friendly and unhurried. We had a window seat so we could watch the late golfers coming in to the 18th hole of the championship standard course and some high jinks from the wedding party on the terrace. The food was delicious – seared scallops with pancetta on bubble and squeak; tempura prawns with coriander noodles; shallot and artichoke tart; lamb Wellington...

All in all then, Matfen is a great success, combining the best modern facilities with oodles of tradition. It's just a stone's throw from the hurly-burly of Newcastle city centre and the magnificence of Hadrian's Wall, but is a haven of peace, perfect for a short break from routine.

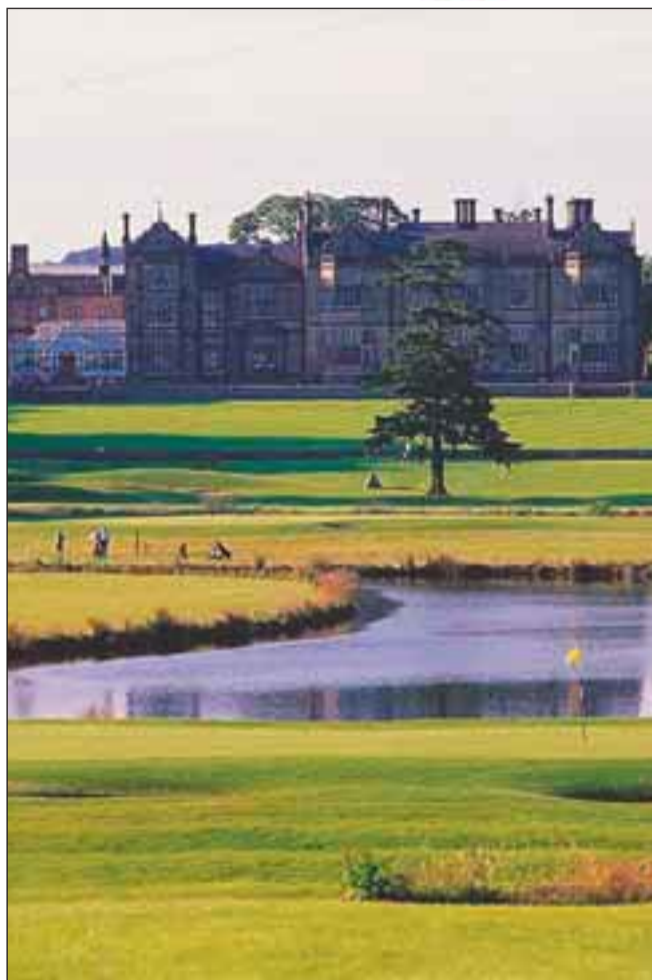
Then, all too soon, but feeling fully refreshed, it's back to the fray. There are battles to be fought, though, thankfully, not so bloody as of old.



The Print Room restaurant, and the pool



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FACTFILE

Matfen Hall, Matfen, Newcastle NE20 ORH. Tel: (01661) 886500; golf bookings: (01661) 886400; E-mail: info@matfenhall.com; www.matfenhall.com

● Stay and Play special offer: one night accommodation inclusive of dinner, bed and full English breakfast and two rounds of golf (valid Sunday to Thursday only) £105 per person. Single supplement £20.

● Double room from £140, bed and full English breakfast. Children under 12 are charged £14 per night, inclusive of bed and full English breakfast, when sharing with two adults.

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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.

BOX					JUNIOR
WING					STUD
OZONE					CAKE
PUSSY					WARBLER
CHRISTMAS					SINGER
COTTAGE					WIRE
NELSON'S					INCHES
PAPER					MARGIN
BLUE					BANK
SCHOOL					BEEF
EXPORT					CARD
COLD					TROT



Name the star pictured on the left ?

ANSWERS
Celebrity wordmatch: Office, collar, layer, willow, carol, cheese, column, profit, bottle, bully, credit, turkey and the hidden celebrity is Carol Smilie
Celebrity stare: Emma Bunton

WORD wise

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

HELIOLOGY

- (A) Study of gases
- (B) Study of wingless flight
- (C) The science of the Sun

C: The science of the Sun

IMPOSSIBLE PUZZLE

Four years ago I was four times as old as Kevin, but three years ago I was only three times as old as him.

How old am I?

SOLUTION
 12 years old.

NE competition

WIN one of five garden love seats from Simply Dutch

corner

THE public fascination with all things horticultural is set to reach its peak this month when gardeners sit back "al fresco" to admire the fruits of their labours. Furniture is becoming as popular as foliage for the average garden plot, and summer is prime time for the big name DIY sheds to pile high and market their wares.

But this summer Simply Dutch, the Leeming Bar furniture emporium, is determined to make a stand against over-priced, mass-produced goods, with a national appeal to gardeners to think about choosing something a bit different for their small corner of England.

Simply Dutch owner, Jason Hadlow says: "I often wonder why people spend hours on end, year in year out, putting an individual stamp on their gardens, only to plonk in the same patio set as their neighbours. Chances are they have paid a small fortune for the furniture at their local DIY chain, and all they have ended up with is a clone of the garden down the road."

Simply Dutch, however, is guaranteed to offer something very different for the garden. Beautiful wood and wrought iron garden furniture sit in the showroom alongside old fashioned post boxes, lamp-posts, garden follies, Grecian urns and stone sculptures. Jason is also currently accepting offers for his life-sized dinosaur and Trafalgar lions for adventurous types wanting to make a unique outdoor

statement. Regular imports from Europe mean there is always something different.

Simply Dutch can be found on Bedale Road in Leeming Bar, just off the A1 in North Yorkshire. The shop is open seven days a week and deliveries can be made UK-wide. Call 01677 427800 or log on to www.simplydutch.co.uk for more information.

NE magazine has teamed up with Simply Dutch and has five garden "love seats" to give away. These beautiful wrought iron seats, with a retail value of £99, will provide a great focal point for any garden. To be in with a chance of winning one of these, all you need to do is answer this simple question:

Where will you find the Simply Dutch furniture emporium? Send your answer, along with your name and address, to Simply Dutch Competition, Features, The Northern Echo, Priestgate, Darlington, DL1 1NF. The closing date is the end of the month and usual newspaper competition rules apply.



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