

The Northern Echo

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The lifestyle magazine
for the North-East

OCTOBER 2003

FASHION
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easy riders

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typing diet

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Power of
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There are many causes of infertility - thankfully there are many ways to treat it.

Now that the Cromwell IVF & Fertility Centre has opened in Darlington, the range of infertility treatments available to couples and single women has never been greater.

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Free IVF treatment in exchange for sharing eggs was pioneered by the Cromwell IVF & Fertility Centre and to understand the merits and acceptance criteria for the egg sharing scheme, a free information meeting is being held.

The meeting will be held on Wednesday, November 19, from 6pm - 8pm at the Woodlands Hospital, Morton Park, Darlington, County Durham DL1 4PL.

To reserve your place at the next meeting, please call Gillian Bell on 01325 371 070, fax 01325 371 071 or e-mail cromwellivf-darl@btconnect.com



The Cromwell IVF & Fertility Centres are licensed by the Human Fertilisation & Embryology Authority

To protect the anonymity of our patients, pictures are posed by models. ECO4N

Helping People Become Parents

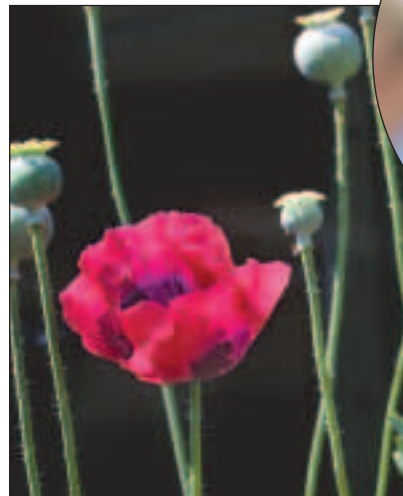
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sharon griffiths

Yesterday I had breakfast in France, lunch in Italy and supper in the Orkneys

FORGET the straw donkey – give me a couple of kippers. Or cheese, chocolates and a few bottles of wine. When it comes to souvenirs, food and drink are the best reminders of all. Tastebuds trigger memories as nothing else can. Just ask Proust. While the madelines got him going down Memory Lane, it's the tang of a breakfast kipper from Fortunes that always transports my brother-in-law from his land-locked Oxfordshire home to the windswept cliffs of Whitby.

He and my sister also head back down the A1 with the car loaded with Swaledale and Cotherstone Cheese, Rosebud preserves and Elizabeth Botham Plum Bread. Eating those at home prolongs their Yorkshire holiday for just a few days more.

Which is why yesterday I had breakfast in France, lunch in Italy and supper in the Orkney Islands.

Well, OK, breakfast was a cheat – the croissants came from Tesco. But in the days before such goodies were always available, a friend always brought us back pains au chocolat whenever he went to France.

We would unwrap the greasy bag and pick out the crumbling pastry. By the time they'd trundled by car and caravan on the cross-channel ferry and up the A1, they had perhaps lost some of their immediate freshness, but no matter. Soon we would be eating the warm flakes and the bitter chocolate and could imagine ourselves back in a pavement cafe in Paris...

The Italian lunch was courtesy of a neighbour who was just home from Florence and who had brought back some wonderful fennel-flavoured sausage and some of those crisp almond biscuits that you dunk in sweet wine – which they had also conveniently brought.

And supper was the remains of my Orkney shopping – Bere biscuits, Gribster cheese and Orkney distilled malt whisky. Brilliant.

There are, of course, some things which don't travel well... the Welsh sausages perhaps weren't at their best when they'd been stuck in a traffic jam on the M6 in a heatwave. And if you're buying chocolates to come home, it helps if you have a coolbag. But as well as the practicalities of

carrying food, some things just don't transplant.

Hands up all those of you who have in the back of the cupboard some bright yellow Italian lemon liqueur. Doesn't taste the same back in the Britain, does it? Especially when it develops a sort of green scum line.

And that extremely drinkable French wine you bought by the gallon from the local cave near your holiday home somehow changes to mouthwash this side of the Channel.

Some things just need sunlight and a foreign setting to do them justice. And maybe good company and the relaxation of holiday. They just don't work when you come in tense and tired on a dark wet Monday night.

But other things work surprisingly well. As a joke, I once brought my husband back some black pudding from the south of France and it has now become a tradition. He has stayed at home and breakfasted on black pudding, poudin noir and Blutwurst from places as diverse as Iceland, Prague, Dublin and Monte Carlo, as well as Fortnum and Mason in London and a farmers' market in Nottingham. He might not have come with me, but the certainly had a flavour of the places I'd been...

There are people, of course, who go abroad and spend their time looking for fish and chips and full English breakfasts and even take their own supplies of sliced bread and baked beans. Sad. They don't know what they're missing.

Clearly, I'm not the only one who likes to bring food home. There's a very good small Boucherie, Charcuterie, Triperie not far from the Gare du Nord in Paris. (Leboine, 144 Rue du Faubourg Poissonniere). Very handy if you're going by Eurostar. There the very patient proprietors are used to the British. They carefully wrap the terrines, cooked meats, the saucisses, the jambon persille in heavy duty waxed paper and then in insulated bags so that they survive the journey home. Just the thing, when washed down with a few bottles of French wine.

You might be back in the weary workaday world of home, but your tastebuds, at least, can savour foreign flavours for a little while longer.

IN THE PINK

AGA, maker of the world's most famous cooker, has introduced a new three-oven Aga as part of its heat storage range cooker collection.

A baking oven, which operates at a moderate temperature and is perfect for cakes, biscuits, fish and gentle roasting, has been added to the hot roasting oven and slow simmering oven.

The three-oven Aga is available in the traditional Aga colours of golden yellow, royal blue, cream, dark blue, claret, black, pewter and racing green along with the new Signature range of heather, pistachio, Wedgwood blue, terracotta and aubergine.

Aga has also gone potty for pink



with a fabulous limited edition pink cooker. A percentage of each sale will be updated to support breast cancer charities.

For local stockist details and a brochure, please contact 08457 125207 or visit www.aga-rayburn.co.uk / www.agalinks.com for

SELF-CLEANING WINDOWS

WINDOW cleaning is the most hated household chore for British women, according to a recent survey, so here's some good news – for those who hate window cleaning – a new kind of glass that cleans itself and spells goodbye

to frequent and laborious window washing. Pilkington Activ™ is photocatalytic: UV rays, abundant on even the cloudiest of days, cause the glass to react chemically with dirt and organic deposits, breaking them down and loosening them from the surface of the glass. Also, it is hydrophilic: it attracts water, which slides down and off the surface of the glass without forming into separate droplets. This ensures that loose particles of dust and dirt are easily washed off during normal rainy weather without leaving smears or rain marks.

Call 0800 52 77 52 or visit www.activglass.com for a full information pack including details of stockists.



NE window shopping

A new lifestyle for Darlington



Loewe, the German TV manufacturer, has appointed the new LIFESTYLE by Alan H Goodrick Ltd stylish store as a Loewe FORUM centre. This highest level of Loewe dealerships displays exclusively designed displays showing the company's products to full advantage with a demonstration area provided, including its highly stylised new Mimo sets, as well as automated lighting, DVD surround sound, all controlled by Loewes irci remote.

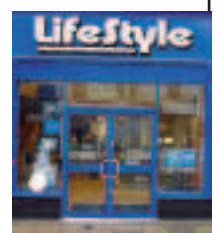
This Darlington store, situated on Blackwellgate in the town centre, had to meet the exacting standards set by Loewe. The strong message this store gives out is to do with Loewes I-Home concept. This is an umbrella term for Loewes home cinema, home multimedia and home automation capabilities, delivered by means of Loewes Mediaplus technology. Modular and expandable, Mediaplus features can be combined to create home solutions that integrate entertainment, internet information and communication in the home using the Loewe TV, ensuring no virus danger. As technology changes with retrofit kits being added the Loewe TV can keep in step with the users lifestyle, this upgrade can be carried out at any time of the life of that product. As this is only the third FORUM STORE to be appointed in the UK, it is worth a visit by the readers. The store also stocks SONY, PANASONIC, BOSE and other well known home cinema manufacturers supplying innovative home entertainment products with several demonstration areas on the second floor.

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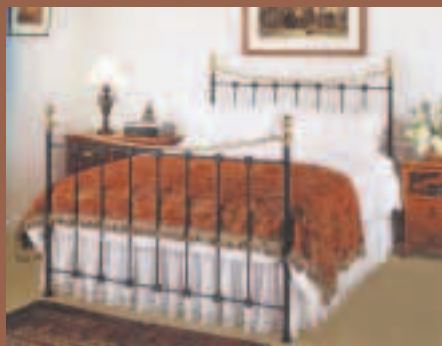
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NE interiors IN ASSOCIATION WITH

CHAMELEON
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On one side is an empty, old brick-built laundry which for decades was used by a storage company but now lies derelict. On the other side there are a couple of old block-built warehouses with roller doors behind which the Post Office once repaired its vans. Then they became a gym but now, with their former owner behind bars for drugs-running, they too lie derelict.

And there's a scrappy piece of wasteland with weeds pushing hopefully through the rubble and refuse of a century of industrial use.

It is an unprepossessing back lane, lined with uneven scorriae bricks – the shiny, grey bricks that are so distinctive of south Durham and which were themselves made from the slagheaps of the steelworks more than 100 years ago.

But to Nigel Massey it represents a dream come true and a gamble that has paid off. Amid the industrial decay of Darlington's past, he has created a modern, minimalist home with a riverside view.

He bought the empty 1920s warehouse in the back lane called Weir Street nearly two years ago for £28,500; now it's valued at £175,000.

"It was an empty shell with brick walls and a concrete floor with a little office upstairs connected by a ladder," he says. "The previous owners had used it for storage and decided to get shot of it."

With another party interested, he had had to act quickly.

"I had to buy it for cash and then put in

Nigel Massey took a huge risk when he bought an empty 1920s warehouse on the shabby side of town. But his gamble paid off handsomely and now he's in line for a national award.

CHRIS LLOYD reports

my planning application," he says. "It was a real gamble because the council could have knocked me back in changing it to residential use and then I would have been left with an old warehouse.

"But I'd been looking for something for four years, driving round, seeing properties: barns, chapels, churches, schools, anything you could do something with."

With the council's backing, he set about transforming the warehouse into a home. "The design was easy because the building dictated what could be done," he says. "It was a case of plasterboard it, plumb and wire it and then put in fixtures people would notice."

He's sitting by his hot tub in the warehouse's rear yard. An ash tree tumbles down towards the river with a honeysuckle falling through it. It's a lovely private area with only the babbling Skerne and the ducking and weaving coots for company.

Nigel's kept the ground floor of the warehouse open, with a brushed steel



From empty shell to dream den



kitchenette at one end, cream sofas and a widescreen television in the middle and a conservatory opening out to the river at the other.

"It's clean lines and white," he says. "It's contemporary, minimalist, keep things out of the way and open plan living."

The eye spots the only item on the downstairs walls: a large designer silver radiator which, costing £1,000, was his most expensive acquisition.

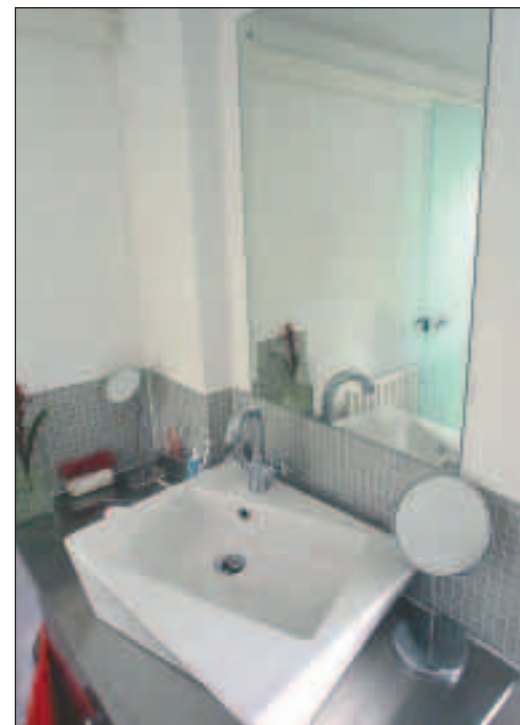
"I think if I put pictures on the wall they will close it in whereas at the moment your eyes are drawn through to the outside," he says.

"I saw the sofas in a shop in Darlington. They had been selling at £5,000 but were reduced down to £1,800 and I knew then they wouldn't sell because of the size of them." A warehouse swallows up what would clutter up a traditional terraced house. "I went away for the weekend and when I came back they were down further to £895."

Nigel set himself a conversion budget of £30,000 and reckons to have come in a few hundred shy. Understandably with such parsimony, he's reached the last three of the Best Value category of the Daily Telegraph Homebuilding and Renovating Awards, the winner to be announced in December.

He moves uneasily up the open stairs to show off the bedrooms.

"I had a bad accident when I was 20," he explains. "I was trapped for one-and-a-half



"I'd been looking for something for four years, driving around, seeing properties, barns, chapels, churches, schools, anything you could do something with

► Continued on page 6

NE interiors



► Continued from page 5

hours under a wagon at Toft Hill. They were going to amputate my left leg. I was two years in hospital and my weight dropped to eight stone."

Upstairs, the clean bathroom has a ceiling-to-floor window which mirrors the shapes downstairs. On the floor is checkerplate lino that looks like the non-slip patterns you'd find on the steps into a lorry's cab and it lends an industrial feel.

In the large, airy master bedroom the main features are the iron trusses and purlins holding up the roof. Nigel had considered putting a proper slate roof on the property, but that would have required bulky new supports to hold up its heavy weight, so he kept to the original.

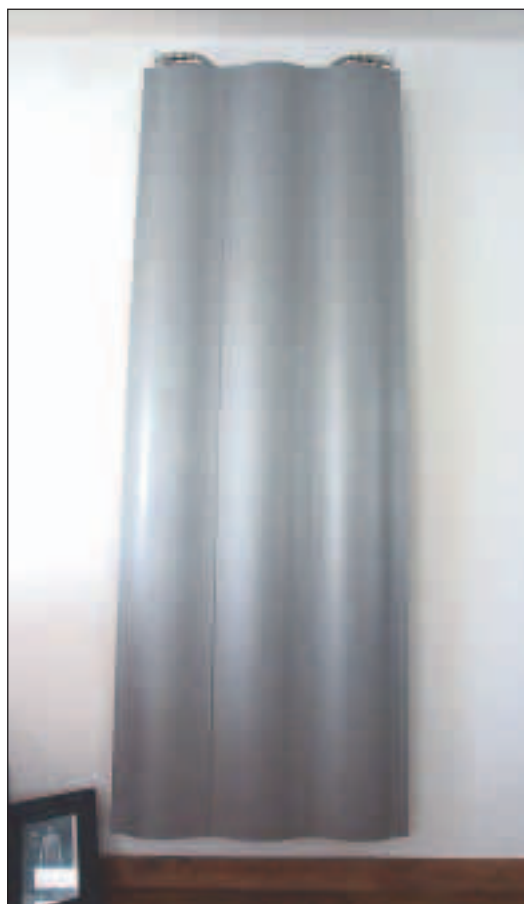
"It's like a caravan with a tin roof when it rains, but it gives you that sense of space," he says.

He moves through to the balcony which overlooks the suntrap yard and the river.

"I have always had this dream to live somewhere different," he says, surveying his work, "otherwise you just live in a house with everyone else. When you've designed it and converted it, your name's on the deeds."

From the balcony, he spots the final piece of his jigsaw resting on a table beneath. It is to go on the outside of the house where once there had been a hoist to haul goods to the upper storey. Now only a bit of sticky-out metal remains.

But, on the table beneath the balcony, is a wooden wheeled pulley ready to be affixed in the unprepossessing back lane. The pulley came from a car boot sale for a pound – the Best Value category of those renovation awards must surely be in the bag.



Warehouse wonder: clockwise from top, Nigel's minimally decorated bedroom; the streamlined pond which leads to French windows; Nigel's pride and joy – his £1,000 radiator



GABRIELLE FAGAN finds out how to create designer interiors at reasonable prices



CHIC ON THE CHEAP:

Clockwise from below – this Granas Glasholm glass-topped table from Ikea was snapped up by bargain-hunting actress Demi Moore; a dramatic display in a hallway from junk shop finds; a second-hand sofa decorated with recycled fabrics; colourful throws, rugs and cushions from Ikea

When the price is right

SUDDENLY it's fashionable to think cheap when it comes to interiors. Forget spending oodles of money to make your home look as though it's come straight out of the pages of those glossy interiors magazines. That's just so yesterday.

Today's style slogan is "cheap chic" – which is basically using imagination and ingenuity and a dash of flair to create beautiful but distinctively personal rooms on a small budget.

Just to prove it, super-wealthy actress Demi Moore has fitted out her new £3m Hollywood home, complete with gym and swimming pool, with furniture from Swedish store, Ikea. One of her friends reportedly said: "Demi is mad about Ikea and often goes through the catalogue and writes down lists of goods for her people to pick up." Moore's bargains have included two glass topped coffee tables, for around £50 each.

Interiors author Emily Chalmers needs no convincing of the merits of creating stylish interiors oozing character by using an eye-catching blend of high street basics and junk shop finds.

She says: "Vision is more important than cash. Money after all can't buy good taste. Style is instinctive and it can come at a snip as long as you have an eye for beauty as well as a bargain. From faking it to making it, there are so many ways to create a to-die-for interior at prices that won't make your heart stop."

First, she advises studying your home to find out what you already have. For instance, peel back tired carpets and you may find floorboards fit for painting or varnishing. Reclaim vintage fabrics, and rustic style brickwork, and invest in some funky loose covers for that tired sofa.

The key is to avoid the humdrum – so don't slavishly buy from only one store, instead mix eras and styles by looking in a variety of places. Ethnic shops, junk stores, auctions, markets and boot sales may yield rich pickings for your soon-to-

be stunning home. Chalmers says: "To get luxury for less, you must be patient. Things don't turn up overnight. So be choosy and spend wisely. It is better to spend a little on low cost necessities and put the savings into an investment buy. That could be a single beautiful object – like a painting – or a floor that will last a lifetime."

CREATE CHEAP CHIC

- Add colour by painting architectural features in rooms to highlight them, or by using a patterned wallpaper on one wall. Second hand shops sometimes have rolls of vintage papers, and there's now a huge choice of new wallpapers as the wallcovering enjoys a revival in popularity.
- Fabrics are your home's clothes, and like your own wardrobe they can change with the seasons. Fake fur, second hand checked woollen blankets and hessian blinds are chic for winter. When summer comes again simply pack them away and bring on the florals and muslins.
- It's curtains for expensive curtains. For a neat finish simply use yacht hooks bought from a chandlery and metal wire, or use traditional curtain eyes and sling them along a painted broomstick or, even sleeker, a scaffolding pole.
- Renovated second-hand furniture is now so fashionable, and can be given a new lease of life if it's repainted or recovered. Ultra stylish retro armchairs and low coffee tables can often be found in second-hand shops.
- Storage needn't be dull. Restored leather trunks or even old leather briefcases have far more character than a stack of plastic boxes. Be imaginative and display objects in surprising ways. Old wooden wine boxes attached to a wall could be used to showcase an indoor plant collection, or a selection of beachcomber finds. An old metal medicine cabinet could be an interesting feature in a bathroom.
- Accessories add colour and interest, and don't be afraid to reveal your taste. But don't just think cushions – colourful and unusual clothes, handbags or a selection of jewellery hung on walls can look stunning.

- Make your home a personal diary by decorating it with things you have collected over the years, a collage of old holiday postcards, sepia wedding photographs collected from junk shops, or kitsch ornaments.

- Floors make the biggest visual statement in your home, next to walls. The latest byword in chic is sheet flooring – vinyl or lino. Strike out with stunning style with a vinyl floor embedded with photographic images of whatever you like.

FAST AND EASY CHIC EFFECTS:

- Disguise an old sofa by using a simple dust sheet as a throw and then making up some striped or patterned cushions using fabric off-cuts.
- Make a feature of your book collection. Cover books in pretty wallpaper or fabric, or display them by height and colour, rather than author or alphabetically.
- Make soft-to-cuddle cushions by hot-washing old woollen jerseys so they go to felt, and sew them into covers.
- A lace tablecloth makes a stunning window panel or bedspread, and jewel-coloured sari fabrics are dazzling drapes for windows or beds.
- Old tree trunks picked up in a salvage yard are perfect for rustic stools. Simply strip off the bark, sand, stain and varnish.
- Make a feature of a boring hall by running a string of fairy lights or a rope of lights along its length.
- Old railway sleepers, found in architectural salvage yards, make stunning shelves or mantels.
- Paint a fridge or wall with chalk board paint and make a message board or space for budding artists.
- Enliven a bland, fitted kitchen by collecting early examples of gadgets such as coffee grinders or weighing scales with brass weights and inject colour with vintage enamel colanders and pots hung on a rack.

CHEAP CHIC: Affordable Ideas For A Relaxed Home by Emily Chalmers and Ali Hanan, photography by Debi Treloar (Ryland Peters & Small, £18.99)

6 OF THE BEST

GRAPE GADGETRY

DRINKING wine is no simple affair for the wine connoisseur with all that sniffing, slurping, sipping, gargling, gulping and spitting – not to mention the elaborate chitchat about aromas, bouquets and so on. If you want to joining the experts without turning into Oz Clarke, try using the tools the experts use to ensure your wine is just as perfect as it can be before you settle down to drink it.

Here are six gadgets we think every wine lover should have in their cellar (cupboard, fridge, whatever...)

TEMPERATURE TRACKER

Wine thermometer/stopper £14.95

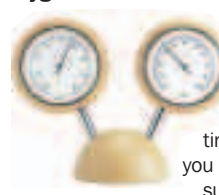
I am told that the perfect temperature for white wine is 53 degrees Fahrenheit and for red 64 degrees, and this little device will help you get pretty close to perfection. The whole thing is encased in a chrome bottle stopper to keep your wine closer to perfect for longer.



CELLAR COMPANION

Hygrometer and thermometer £59.50

For anyone who is lucky enough to have a wine cellar, or who keeps a number of bottles in their home at any one time, this gadget will help you keep tabs on the surrounding air to avoid unpleasant surprises when you come to pop the cork. It measures both humidity and temperature.



BOX OF TRICKS

Four-piece wine set £59.95

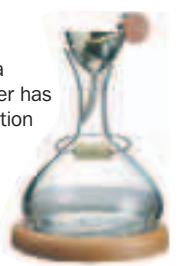
This is a great gift for anyone who drinks wine. The set includes a foil cutter, a bottle stopper, a bottle necklace and a most ingenious air pressure cork popper which pushes air into the bottle and the cork gently out.



WINE WAITER

Lagne decanter £125

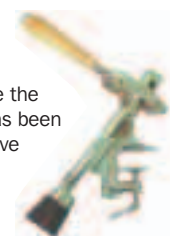
As much of a work of art as a working part, but this decanter has been designed after consultation with leading wine experts around the world to ensure the perfect pour. This handblown crystal decanter has a stainless steel drip catcher, a cork holder and a funnel complete with filters.



CORKS AWAY

Gilberts Rapid extractor £125

Using one of these to remove the cork from your wine bottle has been proven to be the most effective and quickest way to do it. Usually found in bars and restaurants, these level action corkscrews will just clamp on to almost any surface. Foolproof too.



CHILL IN STYLE

King pin ice bucket £195

It looks a little bit like a silver bowling ball and is the sleekest ice bucket I've seen around. Even if you're not a wine drinker, fill it with ice or just about anything really and it will still look fantastic.



Peter Jenkinson

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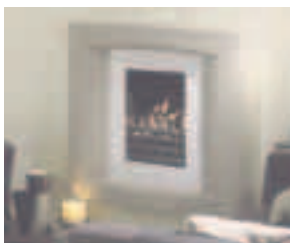
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NE



Flower power

Photographer Rachel Fish spends hours engrossed in her insect's-eye view of the world, she tells IAN LAMMING

PHOTOGRAPHER Rachel Fish is prepared to go to extraordinary lengths for her art, even if that means travelling half way round the world, to end up just 11 miles from where she was born and bred.

The 30-year-old was working as a commercial photographer on a three-year business sponsorship in Sydney, Australia, when she heard about a gallery somewhere back in England. Her boyfriend Cameron Shields had been told about the venue by a friend but when she returned to Britain she was unable to find it.

"I thought it was called Galleria and couldn't find it anywhere," says Rachel, of Stockton. "Then I spotted Gallerina in an artists' newsletter and it was in Darlington. I got a huge rush of excitement when I found the address and was really surprised when I walked through the door.

"Some galleries are so snooty. You get 'oh we don't do things like that' and they haven't even seen my work. I went to a so-called contemporary fine art gallery in Winchester and was told my work was 'too contemporary'."

But Gallerina owner Richard Hindle doesn't agree. "Meeting Rachel and being introduced to her truly outstanding portfolio of images was like a breath of fresh air. It is incredibly flattering that she should go to such lengths to find us and so very exciting is her refreshing attitude and total dedication to her work, which I consider to be unequalled in its beauty and integrity. Her work is truly stunning. As one local photographer put it on seeing Rachel's work: 'The bar has just been raised'."

The gallery is helping to launch Rachel's work with an exhibition of original prints on both canvas and paper.

The works are as striking as they are unusual. Each one is a digital photograph of a flower or a weed magnified many times and reproduced on cotton canvas. "I don't want people to glance at them and think they are photographs," she says. "I want them to be hit by the colour as it is the most important thing. Then I want them to wonder what the image is.

"I want them to appreciate the scale of things, appreciate a beauty that is often just walked by and taken for granted. Enlarging them alters the scale and changes your sens-





es. With these huge colourful flower images on the wall, you can imagine yourself as an insect in a place where size and scale are reversed. The canvas gives them texture so they don't look like flat photographs."

Rachel's interest stems from childhood. "When I was about nine I remember being asked to draw a flower on coloured paper. I chose a yucky khaki green but when I handed it to the teacher he thought it was fantastic. I was always a bit arty and creative but I was told at school that taking creative subjects 'got you nowhere'."

"Then my uncle took me to London and I took a camera. I shot about 12 rolls of film over the summer but they got thrown out because we didn't have enough money to get them developed – that still bugs me today."

Rachel loves working with digital cameras as the results are instant and are projected onto a computer monitor. "You don't have to wait for the film to be developed. You have these ideas coming and can see them there and then, which allows you to really dig deep."

One of her most successful images is a dandelion clock with part of the centre blown away. This ended up being bought by an architect and blown up to cover the wall of an Australian apartment building. With cut flowers it can take a few days before the petals are just ready to be photographed. To get the right result can take five minutes – in the case of the clock – or two weeks, which is

STRIKING: Rachel, top, with her dahlia image and, far left, at work in her studio

how long the dahlia took. "I am very particular. It has just got to be right. It's like meditation and you can get locked into it, spending five hours or so moving the image in the frame by just a millimetre. It's then you realise what a freak you are. It's not like I'm flower mad or anything but I haven't got them out of my system yet – in fact, I don't think I ever will."

Rachel's images are on sale at Gallerina priced from £175 to £1,000. In the meantime she is hoping to move back to the region. "We want to buy a place in the North with a studio, somewhere away from the city with green fields, so we don't have to go down south again." Or Down Under, for that matter.

Gallerina, Duke Street, Darlington.
Open Monday to Saturday, 9am to 5.30pm.

I want them to appreciate the scale of things, appreciate a beauty that is often just walked by and taken for granted

OFF THE WALL

HERE'S a towel rail which removes the need for a kitchen radiator and creates a whole range of design possibilities. Designed by Myson to complement the discreet Kickspace plinth heater, the combined package offers style, dry towels and instant heat for the whole kitchen. The two units will not only add a stunning feature, but also free up valuable space for additional appliances, worktops and storage units.

The compact towel rail, called Petite, will fit onto the end of a cupboard run, under the overhang on an island unit or on any small wall space. The low-power electrical unit is



available in a straight or curved design and has a selection of finishes, including chrome, brushed nickel/stainless steel, traditional or regal gold as well as a choice of stove-enamelled colours.

The Kickspace heater is designed to fit in the plinth of a kitchen unit – in the run underneath the cupboard doors.

There's a choice of three fuel options and eight different finishes.

For copies of the new brochure or to find out where your nearest stockist is, ring Myson on 08457 697 509. Stockists in Darlington include Homecare Heating Supplies in Valley Street and MKM Building Supplies in John Street.

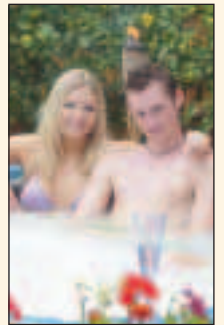
NE window shopping

GIVING WATER A WHIRL

THE relaxing pleasures of a sauna or steam bath are usually only available down at the local health centre. Now they can be enjoyed in the home.

Middlesbrough-based electrical installation specialists E.E.S (UK) Ltd has just launched a

leisure division, Cleveland Spa & Sauna (CSS), to provide a range of water-based equipment. CSS is one of a very small number of Northern companies that hold membership of BISHTA (British and Irish Spa and Hot Tub Association).



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Born to nurture

Location: Redcar

Age of garden: six years

Three favourite plants: hydrangea, dahlia, pelargonium

Tool can't live without: small hand trowel

Maintenance: couple of hours every day. Assistance with lawn mowing Worst job: clearing away for winter

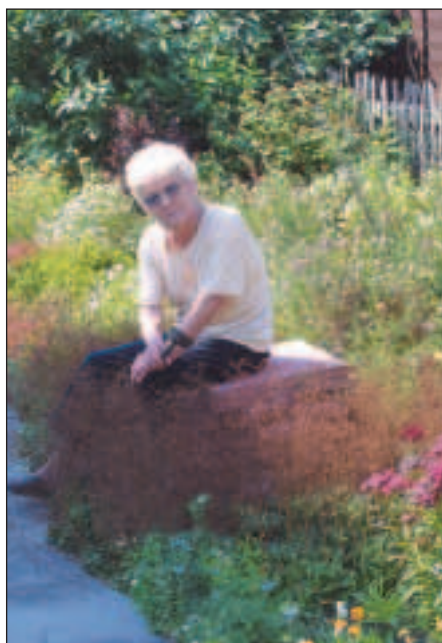
ALMA Moor has only been gardening for six years. She finished raising her family and needed a new challenge. It was the nurturing side of her nature that inspired her. She was given a packet of lupin seeds and had a go at growing them on her kitchen windowsill. The excitement and wonder of seeing them germinate propelled her into action and a new hobby was born. She began the task of transforming the gardens of her terraced house in a quiet street near Redcar's sea front.

The garden was one of the most neglected in the area when she moved in. It was packed full of tall mature trees, but luckily the council agreed to take them down and this opened up quite a moderate space for her to play about with.

The first thing Alma did was to put down some pathways and mark out borders. This was done with bricks and flagstones left over from building renovations. The bricks are buried halfway in the ground at an angle which creates a lovely pointed perimeter, and helps to tie the house in with the garden.

There are one or two structural shrubs at the back of the garden. Alma particularly likes the laurel (*aucuba japonica*), and this certainly stands out against the back fence which is stained an elegant dark green. Most of the other plants though are grown from seed every year. This is either done in the house, on every available windowsill, or in the small greenhouse that was recently erected on her middle lawn. Sometimes she just scatters a mixed cottage garden seed straight onto the border, and waits to see what comes up. These are all intensive, fiddly jobs, but Alma reckons it helps to take away all the stresses of every day life, and helps keep her mind active.

The front garden is accessed by a small wooden gate. There is a small lawn that is curved to allow for loads of planting pockets. These are filled with dahlias, begonias, osteospermums, pelargoniums and poppies. Walking down the side path you brush against large hypericum bushes. Alma has a clever plan to turn



ON THE LOOK-OUT: Alma finds it difficult to relax in her garden. Right: poppies, "love in a mist" (*nigella damascena*) and hydrangers
Pictures: STUART BOULTON

this into a potato patch. Not only would this provide a source of free food, but it would fill this shaded corridor with attractive foliage and flowers.

Immediately by the back door lies a circular lawn. The far side of this is edged by a foot high, curved brick border. This is filled with magenta snap dragons, red lupins and mixed candytuft. A rotary clothes drier stand in the middle of the lawn, but even this has a small bed of



allyssum at the foot of the pole.

A metal hopped archway smothered in ivy, honeysuckle and a crimson rose acts as a gateway to the rest of the back garden. A flagstone path begins underneath this arch and down the middle of the garden. To the left of this is the lawn, the greenhouse and a small semi-circular border containing one remaining mature conifer tree and masses of rubbery sedum spectabile

The main border lies to the right of the flagstone path. This is where Alma does most of her sowing and planting. The colours range from the sunshine yellow of Callendula, to the cool blues of love-in the mist. Soft buttons of double feverfew and feathery seed heads of saxifrage dotted throughout the border gives it a cottage garden feel. This is emphasized by a rustic chestnut railing fence running all the way behind the border.

Alma finds it hard to just sit back and enjoy her creation. She is always on the look-out for rogue weeds, tending to her seedlings, or moving plants around. If she wants to sit out and relax, she has to turn the chair so that it faces the house. That way nothing catches her attention.

She has plans for the future. She is going to move the greenhouse next to the utility room so that it doesn't interrupt the view of the garden, and she is also going to introduce more shrubs, especially at the back of the beds so they don't need so much maintenance.

I am sure though that Alma would never allow her garden to get to the stage where it doesn't need the gentle touch of her green fingers. She is just born to nurture.

PLANT OF THE MONTH

CYCLAMEN (*Sowbread*)

THE hardy cyclamen are delightful little plants which bloom when most other garden flowers have faded. They like shade (not dense), and in particular that which is cast by trees and tall shrubs. They will also thrive in a rock garden setting, as they need a free draining soil, and prefer a border that is facing west or north-west.

Colours range from pure white, through pink to a deep purple. Many of the late autumn varieties are fragrant and carry attractively marked leaves. The Cyclamen belongs to the primrose



family, primulaceae. The name is from 'kyklos', meaning circular, a reference to the spirally-arranged leaf stalk of some varieties.

Brigid Press

Read Brigid every Saturday in *The Northern Echo*

BRIGID PRESS

NE d.i.y

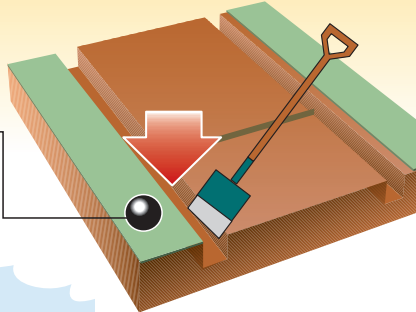
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PLANNING A CONSERVATORY

Choose the right material for you, UPVC and aluminium cost little to maintain timber frames look better but require regular treatment

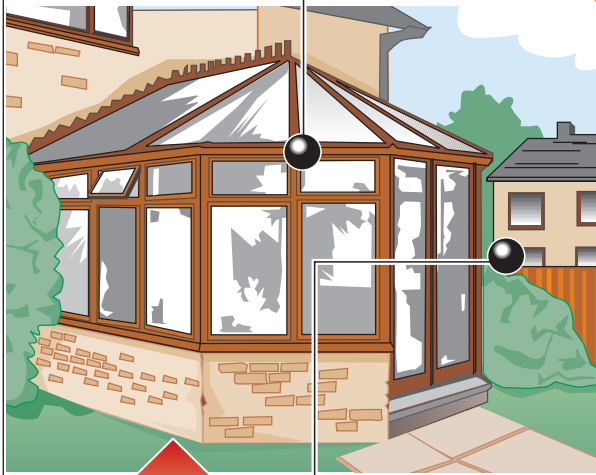
1 Dig down – the exact depth will depend on the soil conditions



2 Mix cement, sharp sand and aggregate - ratio 2:5:7

3 Excavate base area and fill hardcore, top with layer of sharp sand

4 Lay damp proof membrane. Make conservatory base with a layer of concrete and finish off with sand/cement



Site your conservatory on the right spot, sunny or shady depending on preference

Check the position regarding planning law and always consult your neighbours

Key points

- Never block off airbricks in the house
- Re-site down pipes rather than allow rainwater to flow over the conservatory
- Think about what services your conservatory will need



Turn your house inside out

WE all got the chance to spend hours outside during the glorious summer of 2003, but that's not always the case. So if you want to be absolutely sure you and your family can enjoy the great outdoors for at least three seasons every year, a conservatory could be just what you are looking for.

It will give you an extra room where the children can play or a stylish living or dining-room on summer evenings. It is also the ideal place in which to raise and display plants, especially many subtropical species that would not survive outside.

A conservatory is a valuable addition to the smallest of homes - you don't need to live in a country mansion to enjoy one. Not only will it provide extra living space, it can also greatly enhance the style and value of your home.

Building a conservatory can be a suitable DIY project, although you will probably need expert advice for some aspects of the job.

Even if your garden is only tiny, there is a wide range of specially designed models at affordable prices and an exciting combination of styles to choose from. There is something to suit everyone's taste and pocket.

The more elaborate and expensive period-type conservatories can be built in a wide range of shapes and sizes. They can have pitched roofs, be taken round corners or be linked to the house by means of a covered way.

Most conservatories echo period designs, like Edwardian, Georgian and Victorian. Ideally, you should base your choice on the style that best mirrors your home.

The size of the conservatory that you opt for obviously depends on how much space you have in your garden. Other factors that will affect your choice are how much you will be using your room and your budget. But whatever your

by RICHARD SPENCER

intentions, research shows that the conservatory becomes the third most used room in the home, so it is best to select the biggest one you can.

There are several options of materials to choose from, including aluminium, PVC and timber, each of which has special features which will help you decide what is right for you.

Having chosen your style and material, there are a few basics to think about. When choosing glazing, make sure it is safety glass. After that the glazing you choose depends on your budget and the use you put the conservatory to.

Single-glazed conservatories are cheaper to put up, but expensive to heat, so you may be unable to use the space during winter. Double glazing makes heating worthwhile, allowing you to enjoy your conservatory all year round and not be shivering in January. It will also be more secure.

Good ventilation is important, especially during the summer, so have opening windows all round.

Once you have organised the basics, you can concentrate on interior details. The range of interior furnishings for conservatories is vast, so opt for something that fits the period and style of your conservatory and your home.

Shades and blinds will keep temperatures down in summer and bring a feeling of warmth during winter. Also think about having a ceiling-mounted fan which is practical as well as adding an exotic touch.

Lighting is also important, choose between a central light, wall lights or several reading lights dotted about. Subdued lighting is more atmospheric but if placing plants in front of uplighters, make sure they are not too close to the lights, or the leaves will become scorched.

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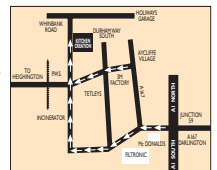
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NE fashion

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Clothes by Just Harleys

Pictures: BRIAN CLOUGH



The legendary Harley Davidson celebrates its centenary this year.

CHRISTEN PEARS goes for a spin and takes a look at some biker chic



easy rider

I'M riding through the centre of Newcastle on Harley Davidson. The engine roars and the paintwork gleams in the bright sunlight. People turn to stare as I pass. Admittedly, I'm just a pillion passenger.

The driver is Grant Anderson, sales manager at Just Harleys, the North-East's only Harley dealership. "The perfect passenger is like a sack of potatoes," he tells me, which is reassuring, as I've never been on a motorbike before. It feels a little strange at first; I have to fight my instinct to lean into the bends, but after a few minutes I'm really enjoying myself. We're not going that fast but being outside, instead of cooped up in a car, seems to create the illusion of speed.

The bike is a Heritage Softail, the classic Harley. Its powerful engine is built for touring rather than speed and it carries two people easily. In fact, my seat is almost armchair-like in its proportions.

Sadly, my ride is over all too quickly and before I know it, we're pulling up outside Just Harleys in Sandyford, Newcastle. As well as the showroom and accessory shop, there's a café, and a few

bikers are sitting outside, enjoying a cup of tea and a chat in the sunshine.

"We get a lot of regulars and everyone knows each other," says Grant. "It's not like the car trade where you sell someone a car and then never see them again. Our customers are back all the time and we ride with them."

Harley Davidson celebrates its centenary this year but is still gaining in popularity. "It gets hold of you. It's a lifestyle thing. I've been into motorbikes for years but when my hair turned grey, I got a Harley. You go through the sports bike phase and then you come to your senses and get a Harley."

Grant owns a mint green Softail. "I love the riding position, the style. It's very much 'look at me'. It's all about image and lifestyle. It's sort of like the urban cowboy and there's even a dress code. It opens up a whole new life. It's certainly changed my life."

Harley Davidson boasts the biggest owners' group in the world. When you buy a Harley, you get 750,000 new friends across the globe. The majority of Harley owners are men and most of them are over 40. Some do four or five miles a



WIN A SPIN ON A HARLEY DAVIDSON

IMAGINE the road opening up in front of you and the roar of a motorbike engine filling the air. Just Harleys is offering NE readers the chance to win a Harleygram – the ride of a lifetime aboard a legendary Harley Davidson.

An experienced rider will pick you up from your home, take you for a spin and then drop you back home again. A Harley Davidson leather jacket and helmet are provided for the ride. You will also receive a free Just Harleys t-shirt and personalised certificate.

To enter the competition, simply tell us which anniversary Harley Davidson is celebrating this year? Send your answer, along with your name, address and daytime telephone number, to Just Harleys Competition, Features, The Northern Echo, Priestgate, Darlington, DL1 1NF. The closing date is the end of October.

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week while others think nothing of popping over to the continent.

They have runs out and rallies and the wives and children go along too. It's not just about men and motorbikes. In fact, more and more women are buying their own bikes. Apparently, they're an easy bike to ride and they're not as powerful as some of the Japanese machines, which puts a lot of women off. Rallies usually involve three or four days' camping. Ride-outs attract 50 or 60 bikes, tootling along at 55mph just enjoying the road and the company.

There's also a lot of charity work. Harley Davidson raises money for muscular dystrophy sufferers worldwide and the Geordie Harley Owners' Group is involved with St Oswald's Hospice Jigsaw Appeal.

Prices for Harleys start at £5,000 and go up to £16,500, depending on the model. There's a 1946 bike in the showroom. I'm certainly no expert but it looks very similar to the rest, suggesting that these bikes really are design classics. There is, however, change afoot. Harley's newest bike, the Vrod, is a futuristic machine with a 1143cc engine is described by Grant as "a rocket ship."

But it isn't until you've bought your motorbike that the real expense starts. Forget shoes and handbags, when it comes to accessories, Harleys are the way to go.

"That's when the fun really starts. You want to make it your own and customise it. It's really hard to stop. You see something in the showroom or something on your friend's bike."

Customisation is huge in the States and is really beginning to catch on over here. It would take less time to read War and Peace than the accessories catalogue. There's everything in there from chrome to enormous back tyres. Apparently they do nothing for performance but look good. I spot a bike that's had £2,500 spent on paintwork alone.

The workshop carries out routine maintenance but in the winter the engineers are inundated with customisation requests from owners wanting to get their bikes ready for the new season.

"It's a passion. We have two or three specialist



people. Customers come in and sit down with them and talk about exactly what they want done. It's a very personal thing, customising your bike."

And then, of course, you have to look after it. The bikes parked outside are all immaculate. There's not a speck of dirt on the paintwork.

"If my wife's watching EastEnders, I'll be in the garage washing the bike. Your ride for two hours and wash it for four. When you're on the road, you want to have the shiniest bike. It's all about pride of ownership and we're certainly all very proud."

It's sort of like the urban cowboy and there's even a dress code

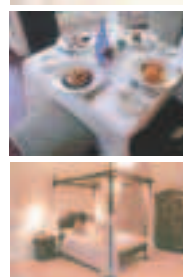
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me and my wardrobe



Pictures: SARAH NICHOLSON



Club owner Les Langley has always had an interest in fashion. Having worked in busy bars and clubs across the North-East for more than ten years, he knows how important it is to look smart. He now owns Darlington's newest venue, the Atlantic Bar and Club

How would you describe your look?
I would say I've got two looks and it depends on whether I've shaved. When I'm clean shaven, I go for a smart, clean cut look, but when I'm not, I just look like a scruff-bag regardless of what I'm wearing.

What's your favourite item of clothing?
At present, it's white shirt by Guide of London, with white patches on it. Before that, it was a light brown leather jacket. It was like a tattoo. It was never off my back.

What's your worst buy?
I paid £550 for a Versace jacket years ago. It's really big black and white checks and I cringe every time I open my wardrobe.

What are your favourite shops?
I like Changes in Middlesbrough and Cruise Flannels in Newcastle.

What's the most you've ever spent on an item of clothing?
I spent £1,000 on a Prada suit once but a hole wore in the trousers after a couple of months so I couldn't wear it.

Which celebrity's style do you admire most and why?
I would have to say David Beckham, not because of what he wears but because he wears anything and isn't particularly bothered about what people think. He can carry anything off because of his attitude.

The Atlantic Bar, in the former RAFA club, in Duke Street, Darlington, has a late licence until 2am on most days and is aimed at couples and single professionals over 25. Anyone interested in joining the club can call Les on 07767 771541.

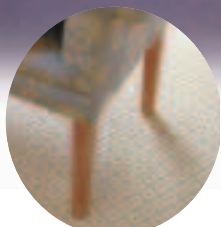
“I spent £1,000 on a Prada suit but a hole wore in the trousers after a couple of months”

FROM TOP:
Hugo Boss jacket, Guide of London shirt; Ball jeans and Guide of London shirt; Dolce and Gabbanna suit, Versace tie

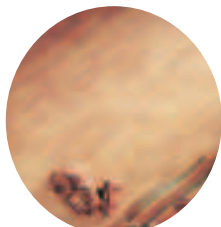
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CHRISTINE FIELDHOUSE and friends book into a health farm which proves there can be gain without the pain

WITH extra pounds creeping back and chocolate cravings on the increase, what better option is there than a health farm weekend with the girls? It beats a jog round the block any day.

Set in the heart of Bedfordshire countryside, Henlow Grange Health Farm has just undergone a major refurbishment, which was already underway when a fire swept through the buildings late last year. A new laconium – a tiled steam area – has replaced the wooden sauna, where the fire is thought to have started, and other new features include a 25-metre swimming pool, a new treatment waiting area and new treatment rooms.

I was staying at Henlow with friends Claire and Sarah, and on arrival I looked so worn out, they laughed at the zombie checking in. Three-year-old Jack had been up since four, and it showed. And as I'd spent the whole summer clearing out old houses we've inherited, my hands were in shreds, my cuticles were bleeding and my back was aching. A sorry sight!

But just one night at Henlow had me back on form and our visit was blessed with good weather. Once we had marvelled at our splendid triple room with its enormous bathroom, we hired bikes to explore the wonderful views we could see from the balcony. Later, we walked around the grounds, which the River Hiz runs through, flowing down a spectacular weir.

We each had our own fitness aims. I used the cardiovascular equipment in the gym and made the most of that



ON YOUR BIKE: exploring the grounds

wonderful new pool, while Claire did a spinning class. Sarah did a fit ball class, which she regretted when she woke up aching the next day. We all joined up for the aquaerobic class, where we managed to strike some very undignified poses.

But the highlight of the Henlow visit was the lovely treatments we had. Our stay included a massage and facial, which were a real treat. I upgraded my facial to a Clarins custom-made prescription facial, which kept its promise of reducing stress, clearing congestion and creating a fresher tone. Upgrading inclusive treatments earns £5 off the cost of the new treatment.

Amber was the beauty therapist who transformed my fragile nails and sore hands into items of beauty, while June wove her magic on my knotted neck and

shoulder muscles. After all that massaging and pampering, I felt fit to face the world again.

Shoppers will love the new boutique at Henlow, which sells sports and casual wear at very reasonable prices. But we did all our spending in the Clarins shop, which was running a special promotion.

We knew we all needed a diet overhaul too, and despite rumours of carrot juice and salads, mealtimes at Henlow are a real treat. Breakfast and lunch are buffet style and there is no limit on portions. Evening meals are a la carte and our favourites were the fillet steak cooked to absolute perfection and a three-cheese pasta, neither of which seemed remotely healthy, but we were assured they were. Even the desserts tasted naughty but nice.

Our evening entertainment was confined to our room – television, books and chatting – but there were evening talks on feng shui, personal image and clearing clutter in the boardroom at 9pm. DVDs were also available at reception and included Bridget Jones's Diary.

So did Henlow do the trick – or are we just as unhealthy as ever? On my departure I vowed to give up taking sugar in my tea, and have since lost half a stone by cutting back on chocolate and getting more exercise. I tried for a year to lose those extra seven pounds, but in just two nights Henlow Grange worked its magic.

FACTFILE

Henlow Grange Health Farm, Henlow, Bedfordshire, SH16 6DB, is one of the Champneys resorts, contact 08703 300 300, www.champneys.com

A two-night break at Henlow Grange costs £289.95 per person in a twin room, and includes all meals, a body massage, a facial or back/shoulder massage, an aquajet treatment and an Eastern scalp massage. We travelled to Stevenage from the North-East with GNER. A Darlington to Stevenage bargain return is £32 and first class fares start at £58 return. Information and tickets are available from stations, from GNER on 08457 225 225, and www.gner.co.uk

Trains run regularly between Stevenage and Hitchin, costing £8 per person and a taxi to Henlow Grange costs £12. The whole journey took us just two and a half hours from Darlington.

Diary of a hair and make-up artist

ALLISON MCKAY

I LOVE the change in seasons from summer to winter. The new catwalk collections are to be seen in all the glossy magazines, which brings a renewed sense of



inspiration and excitement into the studio. I find myself being confronted with questions. "Can you do the hair like the blonde in Junya Watanabe show?" and "I loved the eye make-up in the Comme Des Garcons show. I'd like it like that but a little bit softer." I try to keep my eyes as still as possible while they flick through the fashion pages in my head.

I have worked on the London and Milan catwalk shows but they were exhausting. The nerves, stresses and egos backstage are incredible.

My first fashion show was the Elizabeth Emanuel Collection. I had to put carefully sculpted hairpieces into the models' hair.

The majority of models are late because they usually do so many shows in a day. Everyone barks and shouts at each other, tensions are extremely high and you can't work fast enough.

Once the last models swing down the catwalk though, peace prevails and everyone hugs each other, realising that they all love each other after all!

TRICKS AND TIPS

A TRICK for covering dark circles under the eyes is to use a concealer with a warm peach tone to neutralise the bluish tone of the dark circle.

If you have woken with puffy eyes, chances are the moisturiser you used the night before is too rich or that you applied too much.

Avoid the tendency to pump the wand of your mascara up and down as this will only trap air inside and dry it out.

To create the illusion of a narrower nose, use a matt bronzer as a shader down the outside edges of the nose. Then use a shimmery ivory powder as a highlighter down the bridge of the nose. This is a cheat only to be used at night – it may be noticeable in broad daylight.

A lot of models and make-up artists I know swear by drinking Green Tea to assist in the breakdown of cellulite. A personal favourite of mine is Jackson's of Piccadilly with a hint of mint.

Another personal favourite is Sheer Nourishment Tinted Moisturiser, by Avon. It gives a very natural-looking coverage, is formulated with vitamins A, C and E and has an SPF15 to protect against environmental damage.

● Allison McKay recently moved back to the North-East from London, where she was a cover girl stylist for top magazines.

Massage magic

RESEARCH has shown that a professional massage can actually boost your metabolism and result in an extra 30 calories being burned in an hour.

Collagen – the secret of softer skin

YOUR skin says so much about you. Its appearance gives away your age and your health. Imagine a product that enhances the condition and appearance of your skin and reduces the telltale signs of ageing. Local company, Firmaskin, now supplies 100 per cent natural collagen and the company says taking it regularly will smooth out lines and wrinkles, firm and tone the skin, and reduce cellulite. They say benefits also include major reduction of the painful effects of arthritis and the general aches and pains of ageing. For more information contact Firmaskin on 07810 010479.



STAR QUALITY: Joan Collins believes strongly in the benefits of a good diet and exercise in her battle to fight the ageing process. Above left, with fifth husband Percy Gibson, more than 30 years her junior

Ageless beauty Joan's way

Hollywood star and best-selling author Joan Collins is lifting the lid on the secret of super youth, showing how to slow down the ageing process. KAREN ATTWOOD reports on her tips for staying healthy and keeping the wrinkles at bay

SHE'S 70 and married to a man who is more than 30 years her junior, but Joan Collins is as determined as ever to carry on looking youthful and glamorous after 50 years in showbusiness.

Collins believes strongly in the benefits of diet and exercise. "Even 60 and 70-year olds can see a huge improvement through watching their diet carefully and exercising regularly," she says. "You've got to use it or lose it."

The Hollywood beauty believes in eating sensibly. "Eat proper food. It's the key to everything we are, really, particularly the skin."

She recommends drinking a large glass of bottled water first thing in the morning to rehydrate your complexion – and no eating between meals. "Try not to graze. You're not a cow." Snacks should be limited to fruit or vegetables or just half a Kit-Kat.

And when dining in restaurants Collins' tip is to never finish your plate – stick to two thirds.

For those trying to lose weight who are struck by hunger pains, her advice is strict and to the point. "Go for a walk or run. Exercise can suppress the appetite for at least an hour afterwards," she says. Alternatively, she suggests drinking a few

glasses of water. "It's a proven way to fill up your stomach and that hunger-free feeling can last an hour or even longer."

Although the star did sunbathe when she was a young actress, she now believes the sun is a major enemy to youthful looks and beauty. "I love lying in the sun and I've got a certain amount of skin damage to prove it – but since I was 20, never, ever have I let those rays touch my face. I wear a sun hat, moisturiser and sun block with UVA plus a make-up base and sunglasses."

Collins is also a huge fan of wearing foundation, believing it is actually a useful barrier to protect the skin from pollution and toxins in the air. "All the women I know who are over 40, and who have used a light base or foundation most of their lives have much better skin than the ones who have not worn make-up."

Water is also great for the skin, she says. "Splashing cold water on your face for a few minutes every morning is stimulating for the complexion and gives a glow, but please put on moisturiser immediately afterwards."

Collins is well known for always being perfectly groomed – and has some tips to pass on for that immaculate look. "One of the most important aspects of a groomed look is hands and nails. It is a fact that by

the age of 40, women will have only half the amount of fat cells on the backs of their hands as men. Moisturise after bathing, washing, and after you've done the dishes – in other words whenever your hands have been in soap and water.

"Once or twice a month cover your hands in a rich cream, such as Vitamin E oil or even Vaseline and sleep with cotton gloves on to save your sheets."

Collins' make-up tips were learnt from top make-up artist Whitey Snyder, a favourite of Marilyn Monroe whose advice included: "Always put on make-up in front of a magnifying mirror in the harshest north light possible. If you look good in a bad light, you'll look great in a good light."

Collins outlines her own 12 step make-up regime, some of which is common sense. But useful tips include:

● "Apply the lightest-in-texture liquid foundation and try to get the colour as close to your own skin as possible. I usually do this by buying a light and slightly darker base, then mixing them together in another bottle until I get exactly the right colour I want for my skin.

● "To make sure that your make-up will

last, spritz with Evian spray or dab lightly with cotton wool that has been briefly dipped in water.

● "Wear red lipstick. It's the most glamorous cosmetic that exists and also the most flattering. There are many different shades of red from pale to dark so there must be one to suit you. If you don't like red, wear pink or plum or gloss. And if you don't like anything on your lips, poor you, you'll never be glamorous."

Joan's Way, Looking Good, Feeling Great by Joan Collins (Robson Books, £16.95)

"All the women I know who are over 40, and who have used a light base or foundation most of their lives have much better skin than the ones who have not worn make-up"



Guinea pigs: from left, Lindsay and Linda Jennings, Arifa Akbar with fitness consultant Tracy Cordell

Are you a Meat Muncher or a Carbohydrate Kid?

ARIFA Akbar has just learned that her body is best suited to eating meat. Which would not normally be a problem, but Arifa has been a vegetarian for 16 years.

The 31-year-old made the discovery when she was testing a way of eating which involves finding the foods which best fuel your body in order for it to run at its optimum level. According to this theory, a person's "metabolic type" can lean towards meat, carbohydrate or a mixture of both. Arifa is a "meat" type.

If she is to continue with a trial to put metabolic typing to the test, it will mean shunning her favourite broccoli bakes in favour of steaks and lamb chops.

Arifa, formerly a reporter for The Northern Echo, has been feeling run-down and lethargic for months. She suffers from insomnia and is continually hungry – sometimes getting through six or seven chocolate bars in one sitting and two or three evening meals. She feels it is imperative that she establishes a healthy eating pattern and combats her food cravings. "If eating meat will help then I'm willing to give it a go," she says.

Arifa is one of three women who have agreed to try eating to their metabolic type, with support from Tracy Cordell, who runs a fitness and nutrition consultancy with husband Phil. Called Fit For You, it is based in Chester-le-Street, County Durham.

Linda Jennings is 54-years-old and has noticed over the past six months that her weight has crept up by more than half a stone – even though she sticks to a strict low-fat diet.

"Almost everything I eat is low-fat this and low-fat that, I don't see how I can cut back any more," she says, despairingly. "I've pretty much stuck to a low-fat, healthy diet all my life but I feel as if it's not working and I'm worried that the weight's going to continue piling on."

Linda also reports feeling lethargic

and suffers from aching joints. She wants to feel generally more positive. Discovering what kind of metabolism you have could help you lose weight and stay healthy. Three women put the metabolic typing diet to the test...

Northern Echo reporter Lindsay Jennings is the third "guinea pig". She would also like to lose a few pounds but wants to gain better health. She reports feeling lethargic and has been suffering from regular headaches over the past few months and aching joints.

"I just feel generally run-down and I'm intrigued to find out if by eating more carbohydrates or meat I'll feel better," says Lindsay, 31, of Darlington. To begin with the women fill in food and sleep diaries for a month, including how they respond to certain foods. Then they fill in a number of very detailed questionnaires which quiz them about every aspect of their health and lifestyle, both past and present, such as how they react to certain foods, and what they want to achieve from the diet.

One of the questionnaires is sent to American company Healthexcel which analyses the scores of different traits and characteristics they have revealed to discover what "type" of person they

are. The results are emailed back to Tracy.

Says Tracy: "Metabolic typing is a way of establishing what people genetically, psychologically and physically are like and from that you can find what food categories best suit them. It's not like a diet, it's classed as a way of eating but the important thing is to allow people to come back to their optimum health."

The literature they receive offers advice such as sticking to organic food, cutting out processed foods, alcohol, tea and coffee and avoiding sauces and dressings on their food.

After Tracy spends an hour and a half giving individual attention to each candidate, Lindsay emerges as a "mixed type" and is told to eat a balance of meat and carbohydrates; Linda appears as a "carbohydrate type" and Arifa as a "protein type".

Find out how the women got on in next month's NE...

● Tracy and Phil Cordell at Fit For You can be contacted on 0191-389 0832.

LIFE COACH

CHOICES: SHAPING YOUR LIFE

WE all have to make choices every day. Some may seem small while others seem monumental. Yet every choice we make has an impact on our lives.

How do you make choices in your life? Do you follow your heart and go where desire leads or do you use your head making rational, logical decisions?

In truth we all need to use both head and heart when making decisions. But I would add something else. What of

your soul? How often do you ask what would be the best outcome to help yourself or someone else grow as a human being?

It may sound a strange or difficult question but if you apply it to everything in your life, you will see a

dramatic difference in your choices and in your quality of life.

Juliette Lee
Juliette is available at www.sunflowercoaching.com



NE slimming

Taking the lunge

Exercises to zap cellulite

THIS is the number one way to beat cellulite. It keeps the body's fat levels down and helps keep the skin firm and taut. Makes sure you do 30 to 40 minutes of exercise three to four times a week. Ensure it includes cardiovascular work, such as power walking, running or cycling and weights, such as free weights. Pilates and yoga will also help, though don't make this your only source of exercise.

Target your bottom with:

THE LUNGE: this exercise is top of its class for bum and thigh toning. Its secret lies in the fact that it simultaneously tones the thighs and bum. Stand with your feet slightly apart, hold your tummy in and lunge (take a big step) forward. As the front foot lands, bend the front knee so that your hips drop between your feet and your back knee goes down. Then push back to your starting position. Do three sets of 15-20 repetitions, alternating between legs.

THE STATIC LUNGE: this is very similar to the above, the only difference being that once you have lunged forward you stay in position and move up and down in a vertical movement. Go down until the knee is a few centimetres off the floor, then come up. Do three sets of 15-20 repetitions on each leg.

THE SQUAT: great for a firm bottom. Stand with your feet slightly wider than shoulder width. Imagine you're about to sit on a chair and, keeping your stomach pulled in and your back straight, squat down. Keep the knees in line with your toes at all times. Slowly return to the start position and repeat. Do two sets of 15-20 reps.

KNEELING KICK-BACK: get down on all fours, and with your back straight, pull your stomach muscles in. Raise and bend one leg at a 90-degree angle, then lower the leg back to just above the floor and repeat 15-20 times; swap legs and repeat.

Mood foods

CHANGING your diet can go a long way towards reducing PMS. The liver plays a vital role in breaking down hormones and if your liver is not working at full capacity, you can end up with too much oestrogen and a bad mood. Fibre-rich food like fruit, vegetables, beans, lentils and wholegrains are a great help, and try to cut back on alcohol, coffee, fatty meats and dairy products.

Shopping sins

MOST people are guilty of over-shopping in the supermarket. If you're hungry when you do the weekly shopping, the chances are you'll end up at the checkout with bags of chocolate bars that you really don't need. So eat your dinner before you go, if you don't want to throw your money away on snacks that will only make you put on weight.

CALORIE COUNT

A large portion of chip shop chips contains around 850 calories.

WRITE TO US

Do you have any slimming tips to share with us? Have you found the perfect diet? Write to Christen Pears, NE Magazine, Features, The Northern Echo, Priestgate, Darlington DL1 1NF.

Who will travel 28 miles?



In The Northern Echo circulation area the average distance adults are prepared to travel to buy a new car is 28 miles.*

Classified Motors

*Source: NOP June 2002, The Northern Echo 10% + readership research



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gadget man



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



I SPY: there are all sorts of gizmos to help you keep an eye on your rivals

Eyes for spies and bullet-proof vests

Once upon a time the idea of spying for a living was the stuff of James Bond movies and idle schoolboy fantasies. Not any more, as NIGEL BURTON reports

DO YOU own a briefcase? If you do then I wager you'll probably take it to work every day. I do. Mine's a big, high-impact, black plastic job, the sort of thing you'd expect to see filled with a million dollars in the next Die Hard movie. It looks butch and, even empty, it weighs a ton. All I need is a set of handcuffs to clamp it to my wrist and the illusion would be complete.

Because, in my case, illusion is exactly what it is.

I don't really need a briefcase. For the purposes of this article I opened mine up and did an inventory. The contents were both sad and shocking.

Within the high impact black case were two AA batteries, a REX PC card organiser (long since expired, I'm afraid), four 3.5-inch floppy discs, two pens, assorted expense claim forms, a paperclip, a solid-state voice recorder and a Compaq Ipaq Pocket PC.

Other than the last item on my list, the total value of my briefcase must be less than a fiver. Even worse I was carrying around a load of old rubbish that I never used (Ipaq aside). But times – and briefcases, it seems – are a changing.

Sneak a peek inside the briefcase of a city financier or a big shot stockbroker and you're likely to find more gadgetry than the average James Bond adventure.

London firm Spymaster offers a range of gizmos to the executive who wants to gain the upper hand. Among the devices to be found on its shelves are Bug Pens that contain highly sensitive microphones perfect for recording conversations.

Want to know what your customer really thinks about the deal you've just placed on the table? Then excuse yourself after leaving this little beauty on the desktop, return five minutes later and listen to the conversation that took place while you were out. A snip at £587. If you feel the need for photographic evidence, you can

buy a pen with a tiny digi-cam for a wallet shrinking £1,175.

Other sneaking spy toys popular with this year's execs are Casio watches that contain cameras and recorders. Although they look like nothing more than a fifty quid G-Shock, the technology packed inside means you fork out more than a grand to wear such a device.

Spymaster also does a neat line in high power binoculars that have a built-in zoom camera just perfect for catching your rival in a compromising position. Pictures can then be downloaded onto a PC.

The businessman whose job takes him to far-flung (and often dangerous) places could do worse than fork out for a bullet-proof suit.

Spymaster's three-piece is made from kevlar – the same stuff used in police stab-proof vests – and comes with a covert microphone secreted within the lining that's capable of picking up a conversation six feet away. The manufacturer reckons it can stop a .357 Magnum slug but I'd be loathe to put that to the test. Anyhow, if it fails I doubt you'd be in a position to take it back for a refund.

Then there's the good old briefcase. Mine may look hard but it pales in comparison with the case sold by Spymaster.

For your £1,750 you get an armoured lining that can deflect bullets and unzips to form a 6ft tall protective shield that can stop a 7.62 bullet fired by a sniper.

Just the thing to carry my assortment of pens, batteries and floppy discs...

Other sneaking spy toys popular with this year's execs are Casio watches that contain cameras and recorders.

EATING OUT

ROSE AND CROWN. ROMALDKIRK



Reputation: the Rose and Crown has won endless awards

I'd been meaning to have dinner at this well-known Upper Teesdale restaurant since moving back to the North-East four years ago so I grabbed the chance to sample their cuisine with both hands.

I wasn't disappointed.

Many readers will already know of the Rose and Crown's reputation for upmarket dining in an idyllic village setting but for those who don't, a treat awaits you.

Certainly the oak-panelled, candlelit restaurant is the perfect place for a special occasion or just for a spot of self-indulgence.

And what about the food? To start we could choose between smoked salmon, chicken liver pate with plum chutney, hot blinis with poached eggs and smoked salmon, black pudding with leek risotto or melon, apple and walnut salad.

I opted for the delicious, rich pate and particularly enjoyed the accompanying home-made rolls and piquant onion chutney. My better half went for the tasty hot blinis.

We graduated to the second course, a delicately flavoured fennel and almond soup and prepared to enjoy the main event.

The choice was of grilled sea bass fillets, roast duckling with bacon pudding, grilled calves' liver with grilled pancetta, mushroom and aubergine risotto or char-grilled entrecote of beef with garlic mushrooms.

My wife chose the liver – which was cooked to perfection – while I went for the intensely tasty duckling. We were both impressed by the vegetables, herb crusted potatoes, mange tout and the unusual choice of beetroot which worked really well with our strong tasting main dishes.

Feeling distinctly full we both decided that we couldn't possibly end the evening without doing justice to the dessert selection.

Offered walnut tart with Irish coffee ice-cream, panna cotta with stewed apricots, chocolate fudge ice-cream or Oxford blue and smoked Cumberland cheeses, we quickly made our choices. I had no reason to regret mine, the walnut tart with ice-cream was the perfect way to finish off the elegant feast. My wife loved the rich home-made fudge ice-cream served in a crisp sugar base which looked like a tiny tri-cornered hat.

All in all, for £26 a head plus wine the meal was good value for money, the setting could not be faulted and the service was attentive but not overly so.

BARRY NELSON

Taste the food for yourself. Win a fantastic night out at the Rose and Crown. See page 22

Game show

Meals in Fields brings new meaning to the phrase outside catering. As the shooting season heats up, CHRISTEN PEARS reports

STANDING in the middle of a field, trying to lay a table while the wind howls around you and drives the rain at you horizontally, is probably not most people's idea of fun. But Louise Hosey thrives on it. She's the mastermind behind Meals in Fields, providing food for shooting parties at estates across the North-East. Home-made pies, quiches, terrines, pates, chutneys, glazed ham, fillet of beef and lobster, as well as salads, cheese and biscuits, fruit cake. It's a welcome sight for a shoot returning from a chilly morning on the moors, even though the food is usually served in a tent, open to the elements on several sides.

"They're absolutely amazed to see the table laden with food, especially hot food, although they probably don't quite appreciate how much effort goes into it," say Louise.

Louise is no stranger to shooting; she used to be a beater, but it was while working as chef in 1995 that she first had the idea for Meals in Fields when she was asked by one of the gamekeepers at Raby to provide some lunches for shooting parties.

The business has grown rapidly and a couple of years ago, Louise was invited to appear on the BBC's Food and Drink programme, cooking game in the kitchens at Raby. She now employs three members of staff, each with responsibility for several shoots. Although she loves to get out on the moors, she spends most of her time doing the cooking in the kitchen of her house near High Force.

It's an incredibly demanding job. The grouse season starts on August 12 and runs until December 10, while the pheasant season is from October 1 to February 1. For the first few weeks of the season, Louise is up at 5am and works through until 10pm or 11pm, although things do eventually calm down. After a few weeks, she doesn't need to get up until 6am.

As well as cooking, she's constantly planning menus, ordering and collecting supplies and packing up food ready for the shoots. The menus constantly change. Some people shoot regularly, some every day, so they have to be served with something different. "You have to give them variety and I love coming up with something different. It's a real challenge when you consider the circumstances the food's going to be served in, but it's great fun." She buys produce as locally as possible – fish from Hartlepool, meat from Barnard Castle, wine from Lanchester. "We've got so many fantastic producers in the area, it's important to support them, but you also know you're getting the best quality."

Each estate has its own character and each shoot is different. Louise loves the variety, although she admits it can be a challenge. She remembers one occasion when her car was stuck in mud up to the axle with absolutely no chance of rescue. She had to carry all the food 40 yards down into the ghyll where it

“Once, we ended up in the wrong lunch hut. The party decided to hunt the lunch and somehow managed to find it”



Field fare: Louise and her helpers in a lunch hut

Picture: MIKE GIBB

was being served – and of course all the empty dishes back again. But no matter what happens, one thing she can be sure of is that the shooting party will always find the lunch.

"Once, we ended up in the wrong lunch hut. The party decided to hunt the lunch and somehow managed to find it. They were telling the story for weeks."

Louise wasn't always a chef. She worked as an administration assistant at Glaxo for seven years but in 1988, her father died and she stepped in to run The Old Well pub in Barnard Castle with her mother. Apart from season as a chalet maid in France, she had very little catering experience, but took to it at once. She honed her skills on an intensive 12-week course at the renowned Ballymaloe cookery school in Cork.

"I was already working as a chef at that point but it increased my portfolio and my confidence. I felt I was able to take on much more and it set me up brilliantly for what I do with Meals in Fields."

Louise has her hands full at the moment and isn't taking on any more shoots but she is looking to do more personal catering, whether canapes, garden parties or dinner parties.

"For a lot of people these days, it's important to spend time with their guests rather than in the kitchen. It can be quite hectic cooking for a dinner party and this just takes the stress out of it."

● Meals in Fields (01833) 622347 or email louisehosey@hotmail.com

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NE motoring

The safer options on the road

IAN LAMMING looks at the drive towards safer motoring and the new generation of safety-conscious cars

THE call came in, it sounded serious. A car had overturned at speed on the A1. After clipping a juggernaut, it had skidded on its roof at 70mph before crashing, upside down, into a tree.

Emergency services were despatched, no one was expecting the driver to have survived. But when they arrived at the scene, police, fire and ambulance staff could not believe their eyes. Neither could the driver as he nursed his only injury, a small cut to his little finger.

The smash happened in North Yorkshire and was one of the first crashes involving a car fitted with a newfangled contraption called an airbag. It was a revolution in car safety and since then has saved countless lives. That was in the 1990s and since then car safety has moved on even further to protect even more of us from ourselves.

Cars have never been safer, speed limits have never been more strictly enforced, but unfortunately driving standards have not improved one jot. The word "accident" is a bit of misnomer as, invariably, the crash is someone's fault. Driver error accounts for more than 90 per cent of so-called accidents, the rest are down to mechanical failure or acts of God.

Manufacturers recognise our failings and have built in myriad safety devices to keep us on the straight and narrow and free from harm. But what are they?

Here we take a closer look by driving along in one of the world's safest cars - the Renault Megane - one of the few vehicles to achieve the coveted NCAP five-star European crash test accolade.

On the outside it is just a pleasant hatchback, slightly odd to look at, but practical and fun to drive. But if I were to pay less than the necessary due care and attention, all manner of electronic wizardry would come into play to stop the affordable hatchback from crashing.

If visibility was poor, the car would automatically switch the lights on so I could see, the double optic xenon headlamps casting a beam akin to daylight, varying the light depending on load and speed.

If the rain had begun to fall, the wipers would be triggered automatically, moisture sensors ensuring the windscreen was always kept clear of droplets.

The razor sharp steering would help me steer quickly around any obstacle in my way while the suspension kept the body masterfully under control despite the violent shifting of weight the swerve provoked.

Speed is always an issue in accidents as many drivers lose control under harsh braking. With the Renault this is taken into account too thanks to an on-board computer. Anti-lock brakes (ABS) stop the wheels skidding no matter how hard they are braked.

Ironically, in an emergency, most

drivers fail to brake hard enough so "brake assist" takes over, automatically putting the anchors on full but working with the ABS to prevent a skid.

The car's electronic brain can also recognise when the car is about to skid going round a bend and takes action, cutting the power here, sticking on a touch of brake there.

Megane also boasts traction control, which prevents wheel spin, no matter how hard you accelerate or how slippery the road. Understeer control stops the front wheels running wide if you round a bend too quickly by activating the brakes on the front wheels. Electronic stability control uses a yaw sensor to monitor lateral movement, which it corrects if it goes beyond the parameters programmed into the computer.

With so many gadgets working so hard, it's surprising anyone manages to crash in the first place, but it happens. Then another line of defences kicks in, with sensors telling the brain how severe the impact is likely to be. Within one ten thousandth of a second "adaptive" airbags are deployed accordingly from the front, side and roof to protect the head and upper body. These intelligent bags work out exactly how much to inflate after considering all the factors involved, such as speed, impact and passenger physique.

There's even an airbag in the seat that prevents submarining, where the passengers can slip under the seatbelt. Seatbelts automatically tighten themselves (read "pre-tensioned" in the brochure) and release the pressure slowly so as not to injure.

When the big bang happens, the car body is designed to crumple and absorb the energy, cocooning all inside and protecting their squishy bits from injury. The body contorts and dissipates the energy of the crash, while a rigid steel cage protects the occupants.

The impact also kills the engine, cuts the fuel and puts on the hazard warning lights.

Car safety has come a long way in a short time since the driver's lucky escape on the A1 in North Yorkshire and it doesn't stop there. Renault is already working on systems that can correct human error by predicting crashes, detecting obstacles and magnifying drivers' field of vision. Driving standards still won't improve but with the next generation of safety conscious cars, this should matter even less.

RENAULT MEGANE:
 one of the few vehicles to achieve the coveted NCAP five-star European crash test accolade



NE connections

PLACES WITHIN EASY REACH
OF THE NORTH-EAST



Fresh Aire



CLOCKWISE FROM MAIN PICTURE: the beautiful rolling countryside of the Aire valley; the Marriott Hollins Hall Hotel; Salt's Mill, and inset below, Sir Titus Salt

PETA KING enjoys a taste of the post-industrial West Riding at the remarkable village of Saltaire

THE faces of the two teenage mill girls look cheekily, confidently out of the photograph as they stand, arms linked, in their overalls. And they have every reason to look pleased with themselves – as workers in Salt's Mill, they were the lucky ones.

The mill, and its village of Saltaire, near Bradford, were the life work of philanthropist Titus Salt, who, in the 1850s, set a standard for working and living conditions previously unheard of in the industrial world.

The picture of the mill girls is one of many fascinating photographs of Bradford and its surrounding towns at the Marriott Hollins Hall Hotel, at Baildon, near Shipley. Looking now over the beautiful rolling countryside of the Aire valley, it is difficult to imagine how the mills once played such an important economic – and environmentally devastating – role in the history of the area. But the photographs tell the story: row upon row of huge chimneys belching dense black smoke; canals crowded with barges loaded down with bales of wool, and hundreds upon hundreds of mill hands – men, women and children – working in conditions unimaginable today.

Hollins Hall, built in the 1800s by a local brewery family, was sold to a mill-owning widow in the early 1900s and later to a Shipley businessman who made his fortune from manufacturing firefighters for Woolworths.

It became a hotel in 1990 and now this grand Victorian-style mansion combines the atmosphere of a traditional country house with the best in contemporary comfort. It has an award-winning leisure club – membership is complimentary for hotel guests – with a huge pool, saunas, steam room, gym and aerobics studio, and a championship 18-hole golf course stretching up to the moors above the hotel



Philanthropist Titus Salt, in the 1850s... set a standard for working and living conditions previously unheard of in the industrial world

with stunning views across the valley. In fact, the first tee is such a climb from the hotel that buggies are thoughtfully provided to get you there.

There are two restaurants: the brasserie-style Long Weekend Café Bar next to the leisure club – great for families, and where the cod in Boddington's batter is greatly to be recommended – and, for formal dining, Heathcliff's with its views across the terrace and gardens and imaginative menu of new British cuisine. Heathcliff's also serves the hotel's traditional breakfast buffet, enough to set up the

most enthusiastic shopper or sightseer for the day.

And, after such a breakfast, a 20-minute stroll will take you to Esholt, which, as all Soap fans will know, is the original Emmerdale village where the series began. The Woolpack is open for business, but you won't find Amos behind the bar.

A model village of an earlier kind, Saltaire, is a ten-minute drive from Hollins Hall. In 1857, a local newspaper reported: "The site chosen for Saltaire is, in many ways, desirable. The scenery in the immediate neighbourhood is romantic, rural and beautiful. A better body of factory 'hands' than those in Saltaire I have not seen. They are far above the average of their class in Lancashire, and are considerably above the majority in Yorkshire."

Saltire was the brainchild of mill owner and social reformer Titus Salt, who, as the largest employer in Bradford in the mid-1800s, saw first hand the effects of the working conditions on the population. With over 200 chimneys continually churning out sulphurous smoke, Bradford became the most polluted town in England. Only 30 per cent of children born to textile workers reached the age of 15.

Salt discovered a smoke burner that produced very little pollution and although he used them in all his factories, he failed to persuade other mill owners in the town to follow his lead. So, in 1850, he announced plans to build a new industrial community called Saltaire, three miles from Bradford on the banks of the river Aire. At the centre of the village was Salt's Mill, the largest and most modern in Europe, which opened in 1853. Much of the machinery was underground to reduce noise, flues took the dust and dirt away from the factory floor and the chimney was fitted with a smoke burner to reduce pollution in the village.

At first the 3,500 workers travelled to Saltaire from Bradford, but over the next

few years Salt built 850 houses with piped water, gas and their own outside lavatories. Saltaire also had its own park, church, school, hospital, library and shops.

Titus Salt's legacy, now celebrating its 150th anniversary, is still to be marvelled at today. It's unlike any other industrial community in its neatness and symmetry and everywhere are reminders of his remarkable philosophy. But perhaps the greatest memorial to his ideas lives on in Salt's Mill, which apart from housing several high tech companies employing 1,500 people, is also home to three David Hockney galleries with over 300 examples of his work going back to his days at art school, a bookshop, diner and several designer shops.

Other places within easy reach of Hollins Hall are the bustling market town of Skipton, the Bronte Parsonage Museum at Haworth and the magnificent Harewood House and gardens, near Leeds.

● **Dinner, bed and breakfast at Hollins Hall costs from £65 per person per night.**

● A round of golf, dinner, bed and breakfast is £85 per person per night and a Sunday Night Golf Promotion – bed and breakfast on Sunday and a round of golf on Monday – is from £39 per person.

● **Children up to 16 sharing a family room stay free, just paying for meals, and children staying in their own room receive a 50 per cent discount on a room-only basis.**

Contact Hollins Hall on (01274) 530053, or visit www.reservations.hollinshall@marriott-hotels.co.uk

● The David Hockney 1853 Gallery is open seven days a week and admission is free

● **The Bronte Parsonage Museum, Haworth (01535) 642323 or www.bronte.info Harewood House 0113 218 1010**

NE puzzles

CELEBRITY WORDMATCH

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.

WALL						PARTY
SMOKED						PINK
MUMBO	■					JET
PLUM						KETCHUP
CAPITAL						BOX
EARTH						GOOSE
SPLIT						WIND
CLAW						DRILL
MAGIC						SLIPPER
RAT						IVY
BITTER				■		SOLE
SUN						LIZARD



CELEBRITY STARES

Name the star pictured on the left

Celebrity stare: Leslie Grantham

Thompson
carpet, poison, lemon, lounge and the celebrity is Emma
salmon, jumbo, tomato, letter, mother, second, hammer,
Celebrity wordmatch: The missing words are: street,

ANSWERS

WORD wise

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

HARRY

- A A small dog
- B To cover seeds
- C Harass

ANSWER

C: Harass

IMPOSSIBLE PUZZLE

"When I was twice as old as you are now," said Jane, "you were a third as old as I am now."

Linda thought a moment. "That's right," she agreed. "And seven years ago, you were four times as old as I was."

How old was Jane?

SOLUTION

Jane was 27 years old (Linda 12).

NE competition

WIN A FANTASTIC MEAL AT THE ROSE AND CROWN

corner

THE Rose and Crown can boast impressive credentials. This year it was nominated Inn of the Year 2003 by the Good Hotel Guide and AA Pub of the Year for 2003. It was also runner-up for the Pride of Northumbria Small Hotel of the Year Award.

Before you enter this lovely 18th century coaching inn, it is worth having a stroll around Romaldkirk village green, taking in the stocks, the water pump and the old Saxon Church, known locally as the Cathedral of the Dale.

Once inside, the inn makes an immediate good impression, with its oak beams, log fire, sparkling brasses and an abundance of fresh flowers. Oh, and the beer (a good choice of real ales) isn't bad either.

Incidentally, before you leave – and this applies only to gentlemen – make sure to check out the splendid selection of risqué English seaside postcards which adorn the wall of the gents. You can almost hear Sid James' distinctive laugh echoing back from the tiles.

The Rose and Crown at Romaldkirk, Upper Teesdale, is offering one reader the chance to win a dinner for two on the evening of their choice (subject to availability) and a bottle of house wine.

All you have to do is answer this question: **Where is the church known as the Cathedral of the Dales located?**

Answers on a postcard please to Rose and Crown Competition, Features Department, The Northern Echo, PO Box 14, Priestgate, Darlington, Co. Durham DL1 1NF

The prize is subject to availability. Winners must claim their prize before the end of January 2004 but not between Friday, December 20 and Saturday, January 4.

Contact the Rose and Crown at:
The Rose & Crown Hotel
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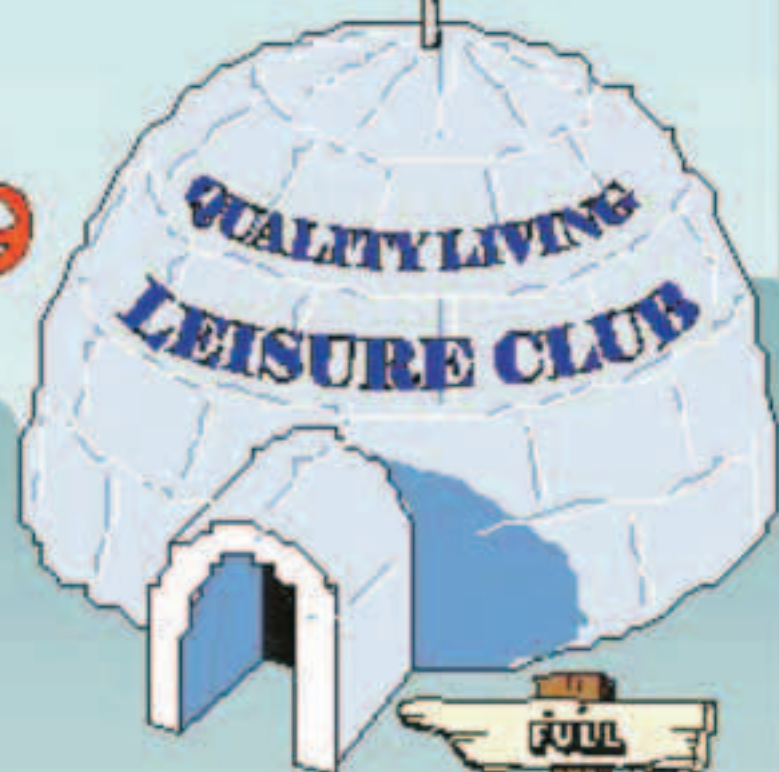
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