

The Northern Echo

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The lifestyle magazine
for the North-East

NOVEMBER 2003

**ME AND MY
WARDROBE**

**The nailbar
boss**

**DIY
Getting the
home fires
burning**

**CHRISTMAS
GIFTS**

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sharon griffiths

“This is the month that sorts the Planners from the Panickers

OUR mothers and grandmothers, of course, would already be organised by now. It might only be November, but Christmas could come whenever it liked, they would be ready for it.

Right at the back of the pantry, inside a tin and wrapped in layers of greaseproof paper would be The Cake. This would have taken at least two days to prepare and bake, probably in late October, early November. The tantalising smell of it in the slow oven of the Aga would fill the house, so the smell of Christmas is always bound up in my mind with the smell of Bonfire Night.

Then, having been admired, The Cake would be whisked away into the dark where every so often it would be plied with rum or brandy. Like taking offerings to some capricious god, except my grandmother – who favoured brandy in her cakes – always had to have a glass or two first to judge it was up to standard before she laboriously undid all that greaseproof wrapping.

She made her own mincemeat, too. Stone jars of it, rich fat fruit and a few generous slugs of sherry.

The end of this month, Stir Up Sunday, was the day to make Christmas puddings. The steam in the kitchen was worse than washday. The puddings' favourite tippie was rum or Guinness.

By the time they'd joined The Cake and The Mincemeat on the shelves, the smell of booze in our pantry was so overpowering that you could get drunk just breathing in on the way to the biscuit tin.

And that was just festive food...

Previous generations didn't spend so much money on Christmas, but they put a lot more effort into it because so many of their presents were hand-made. My mother once spent a very tricky autumn watching television with my father, while knitting and pretending to follow a pattern for a lady's cardigan. She was actually knitting him a jumper for golf but had to make do with surreptitious peeks at the proper pattern which was stuffed beneath the sofa cushions.

Now our effort goes less into making things and more into spending money. There are two conflicting theories here.

One says that the earlier you start your Christmas shopping, the better. You have

more time, are less stressed and can think about things, make more sensible choices from a wider range of goods. You can budget properly, spread the cost. If you leave it all until the last minute, then you panic and just throw money at the problem. Usually more money than you actually have. Tricky.

The second theory is to leave it all to the last minute because the sooner you start, the more things you see to buy. And anyway, it's more fun Christmas shopping when it is really nearly Christmas. People who buy their Christmas presents in the January sales and have their Christmas cards written by August Bank Holiday are no doubt wonderful organisers, brilliant budgeters and admirable in their efficiency. But they are also scary. Very scary.

But this is the month that sorts the Planners from the Panickers. The Planners will be feeling very pleased with themselves now, everything just about done, just the odd small stocking filler to get. They are probably wrapping a parcel or so a day, peacefully, leisurely, enjoying the anticipation. They will never ever miss a final posting date.

The Panickers, meanwhile, are thinking that there's still ages to go yet and haven't even begun to think about it. They will dash round the shops, be surprised that there's not much left, but still spend twice as much as they budgeted for, and then spend Christmas Eve fighting a battle with wrapping paper and sticky tape and find – too late – that they don't have enough of either and that they forgot gift tags entirely so will have to scribble the names on the paper, where no one will be able to find them...

Sound familiar?

It does to me. Except that this year I am feeling unbearably smug because I have actually done some Christmas shopping.

Well all right, I haven't really. It's actually a small something I ordered for my husband's October birthday and it came too late, so he can have it for Christmas and I've ticked it off a Christmas list to give me an air of efficiency. No, I haven't wrapped it. Come to that, I'm not sure where it is anymore.

Doesn't matter though does it? There are still weeks to go until Christmas...

GROOVY FLOORS

THE problems involved in fitting a traditional wooden floor in your home are now a thing of the past, says a company in Peterlee. Laminate flooring specialists BHK (UK) Ltd have launched a new range of Modema® Vision V-groove laminate floorboards that can be clicked together by the householder or DIY enthusiast without the need for gluing or nailing. The floorboards never need re-varnishing, re-sanding or waxing, and can be kept clean by wiping down with a damp cloth.

Launched as a modern, time saving alternative to traditional wooden floors, BHK say their Vision V-groove laminate floorboards save the customer up to 50 per cent in fitting time due to the revolutionary Unilic® system that clicks them together. They have been made so that when fitted, a stylish V-groove runs down the side of each floorboard, creating the appearance of solid wood flooring.

Offered in Estate Oak, York Beech, Montego Beech and Hemlock, the



floorboards have the grain and appearance of wood, but with none of the potential decaying problems associated with it. They come with a ten year abrasion resistance guarantee. BHK also stocks a special underlay that aids with soundproofing and acts as a moisture barrier. Further details from BHK in Peterlee 0191 587 0841.

NE window shopping

EASING THE PANE

EVERYBODY knows that it is virtually impossible to find a window cleaner. To solve this problem, Anglian Home Improvements, the UK's largest replacement window company, has launched a new website www.findmeawindowcleaner.co.uk, designed to help you find a window cleaner in your area. The website has been developed by Anglian Home Improvements, in conjunction with the National Federation of Master Window and General Cleaners. Simply go to www.findmeawindowcleaner.co.uk, enter your town or county and before you can say "squeegee" a list of window cleaners in your area will appear.

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 rci 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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NE interiors IN ASSOCIATION WITH

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ON DISPLAY: everything and the kitchen sink...

The house of surprises



The Atkinsons, a veritable nest of magpies, will have no truck with minimalism. It's far too boring... JO STEVENS marvels at their collection of memorabilia from around the world

HAVE you actually done it then? Gone minimalist? Taken heed of all those bossy interior designers and lifestyle advisers who never seem to be off our screens?

We've been bombarded with advice. You only have to grit your teeth, shove a lifetime's paraphernalia into black sacks, wave it all away and soon you'll be living in an oasis of tranquillity and calm and never look back. Mmmm. Well, actually I was feeling reasonably good about my efforts. So why am I suddenly rattled now?

I blame Heather and David Atkinson. From the moment Heather opens the door of her elegant three-storey Georgian home and I catch a glimpse of the vast array of pictures prints and memorabilia taking up every space available, I begin to wobble. We go through to the main hall and my worst fears are confirmed. This is my true idea of interior heaven. And it just ain't minimalist. I don't know where to look. Every surface has something pinned to it, hanging from it or plonked on top of it.

Hang on to my coat tails and we'll take a breathless dash through this character-filled home and maybe redefine our ideas about style as we go along.

David displays his collection of musical instruments in the hall, including guitars, banjo, mandolin, ukulele.

The Atkinson family – David, Heather and daughter Fliss, who occupies the top floor – are great travellers and love to bring back reminders from all corners of

“An ornamental eagle brought back from Tiananmen Square spreads out on a wall...”

the world. The cloakroom is awash with memorabilia, including a picture of The Forbidden Palace in Beijing.

The family room is cosy and relaxing. Heather shows me pictures of a Christmas holiday in the Falkland Islands, a part of the world very dear to their hearts.

Into the kitchen now. Ceiling beams loaded with woks, saucepans, baskets, original old keys, foreign banknotes, a warning sign about dangerous mines (the Falklands again). And where else would you find the remains of an Argentinian Field Kitchen?

An elderly local chap has told the Atkinsons he can remember his mother working in the house and he'd sit with her as a child and watch her black-leading the grate.

We examine old hats on a stand, in the extension known as “The Back”. Solid pieces of furniture handed down from both sides of the family and a 27-drawer police station chest sit happily together. There are guild flags brought back from travels, a wall completely covered in original wine labels...

An atmosphere of ease and relaxation pervades this corner of North Yorkshire, home to these Atkinson magpies who can't throw anything away. The family doesn't care a hoot about ‘coordinating’ or ‘matching’ things. Being surrounded by treasured items handed down through the generations, each with a unique history, and collecting what either fascinates or amuses them is much more important.

The spacious dining room, although retaining its original Georgian windows and fireplace, is again an eclectic mixture of furniture. I'm drawn to some rare ceramic tiles framed and displayed around the walls. More guitars are in evidence.

A “smoker's companion” from David's family includes a pipe rack, boxes of tobacco, of snuff, and a smoker's penknife.

The picture-lined staircase in this Grade Two Listed building takes us to a landing



CALM CORNER: Heather Atkinson relaxes in the least cluttered room. Below: "the Back", where memorabilia from the family's many travels is stacked up, and the stairway, home to the family's collection of musical instruments



A LOTTA BOTTLES: the wall covered in original wine labels and the cellar, where the family's wine collection is housed

Pictures: SARAH NICHOLSON

once containing a minstrels' gallery. Structural problems led to its removal and the space now houses a collection of china tankards and an original old sewing machine. An ornamental eagle brought back from Tiananmen Square spreads out on a wall. A second collection of hats on a staircase wall includes Heather's father's mortar board, David's father's trilby, a Parisian beret, a Chinese hat/fan, and a fez.

We're now in the large elegant sitting room on the first floor examining Heather's work in restoring the original 1770s fireplace, with its beautiful old tiles. There is stately and solid furniture, including an enormous sideboard and a heavily-carved chest from the Far East which belonged to Heather's mother. There are old maps, collections of cat ornaments, a Chinese prayer wheel, original 'toast masters'

glasses, ancient framed tiles from Turkey... I could write a book.

A long narrow corridor, walls lined with pictures, leads to the bedrooms where Methodist founder John Wesley once took his repose. The family has never seen the house ghost although visitors have reported the presence of an elderly lady and animals are said to raise their hackles at certain times of the night. A quick look

in the cellars to inspect the wine – I give my head an almighty thump on the way up – and it's about time to tear myself away.

I've had a really enjoyable morning in a warm, unpretentious atmosphere. And if true style is to do with surrounding yourself with things you love, having fun and making sure your visitors relax and have fun too, then the Atkinson family has this gift in spades.



LIGHT FANTASTIC: 32 banks of lights in the penthouse can each be dimmed to a finite degree. The latest kitchen gadgets are all on tap



CLEAN LINES: wires are sunk into walls and media servers mean you don't need any bulky CDs

The home with a mind of its own

Home automation could revolutionise the way we live.
CHRISTEN PEARS reports



CHANNEL SURFING: watch TV from the comfort of your bath and keep warm with funky, modern, pre-programmed radiators

YOU'VE had a long day at work. Just before you leave the office, you call home, and by the time you arrive, the fire is on and your bath has been run. You open the door and your favourite CD starts to play. As you walk to the bathroom, the music follows you through each room. You settle into the water, lie back and switch on the TV at the foot of the bath. This is home automation – having complete control over your home from one simple keypad, anywhere in the world. It is not a new concept – people have been wiring their stereo speakers around their lounges for years – but complete automation takes the technology to a new level. It involves everything from heating and security to home cinema and multi-room audio video. Custom installation is extremely popular in the US and is beginning to take off in London, but Lifestyle Technology is now offering the service in the North-East. The company recently won the Judges' Special Award at the 21st Century Living Awards for its work at Ropner Gardens in Middleton St George, built by Clarion Homes. Clarion installs the basic technology, which consists of wiring within the walls, in all of its homes. At its most basic level, it means you can watch TV or listen to your hi-fi in every room. "We put the technology in one room and then share it through the rest of the property. It's about bringing technology into the home in a cost-effective way. The wiring itself costs no more than a few hundred pounds and you can add as much or as little as you like. You don't have to do it all at once," says Dave Allison.



HOME AUTOMATION: a plasma screen with sunken speakers, top left; you can use the tile selector in the shower to select from 10,000 radio channels on the Internet, above; smooth walls with no unsightly wires in the bedroom, left

As you walk to the bathroom, the music follows you through each room. You settle into the water, lie back and switch on the TV at the foot of the bath

Dave spent 12 years in London, working as an IT consultant for blue chip companies but was approached by Steel River, the North-East lifestyle group, in November last year to develop the Lifestyle Technology business for Clarion Homes. It has proved so popular, he is now working with other developers in the region.

At Ropner Gardens, all of the flats have a basic system that includes multi-room audio visual and specialised lighting systems. But the penthouse takes things to a new level. In the living room, there are five integrated speakers and a plasma screen to create a cinematic experience.

There's a TV over the bath in waterproof housing, and speakers in the shower. Some people even have TVs in the shower. The owner even has a remote-controlled dog with a video camera in its head. Using the Internet, he can make it walk round the house, using it as an extra security measure.

The lighting system is incredible – 32 different lighting circuits allow the owner to create dozens of different effects and moods. It cost around £18,000, but a more modest system, with just six zones would cost around £4-500. "When you think about the cost of dimmers, say £30 each, it all adds up but this a much neater and more elegant system," says Dave.

The fire is controlled using an infra red remote and everything else is controlled by a web pad, a wireless computer. But those of us who can't even programme the video need not worry. "Anything that is remote controllable, you can control through the Internet or telephone," says Dave. "We have to make it simple or people won't use it."

Although the technology can be installed in older homes, it is much easier if it is integrated into a new building. Dave likes to be involved right from the start, working with architects so they're aware of what's available and allocate space for it.

Some customers also like to be involved in the early stages but Dave usually recommends they wait until they move in. That way, they can find out exactly what kind of system they want to create.

Dave says: "It's for absolutely everyone, not necessarily people who are really into technology. Anyone can create the lifestyle they want. Technology is improving all the time and almost anything is possible."

● Lifestyle Technology, 14 High Street, Yarm.
(01642) 793806. www.lifestyletechnology.co.uk

6 OF THE BEST

TRADITIONAL TOYS

THERE'S no doubt that modern technology is a firm favourite with kids of all ages, or that computers and gaming consoles will be at the top of youngsters' wish-lists this Christmas. However, there is an alternative – playscenes are among the best ways to feed younger children's imaginations. Crafted with attention to detail, the wooden sets will stand the test of time – and plenty of rough treatment.



BYGONE TIMES

Medieval Castle (£87.50)

A really impressive castle, complete with ramparts, portcullis, murder hole and ladders complete with 14 characters. This castle flat-packs away into its very own box to make sure your soldiers don't go AWOL – it's a toy that you'll treasure.

LORD OF THE MANOR

Battle Castle (£19.95)

Re-enact famous fights in history, or at least let your kids do it. It's a great way to learn. This set is made to the highest standards and the brickwork is almost as good as the job I've had done on my garden wall.



TWO BY TWO

Noah's Ark (£59.95)

This set contains 34 perfect pieces and I'll bet it will be no time before you're humming The Animals Came In Two By Two all day and driving folk mad.



SKULL AND CROSSBONES

Pirate Ship (£97.50)

With ten hearties on board this giant pirate ship, it can give your land-loving mini-pirates from the age of four a great deal of pleasure and excitement.



EMERGENCY

Fire Station (£19.95)

This slightly cheaper set is a better one for the very young. Watch their faces light up when they say the "nee naw" sound for the first time. My little one didn't stop for four days solid.



THE GREAT OUTDOORS

Wooden Farm (£58.50)

Weather outdoors not looking too good? Don't fancy getting all mucked up trudging around in the dirt? Then bring the farm into your front-room. This set has all the makings of a good old sing-song of Old Macdonald and the kids really loved it.

Peter Jenkinson

All products available from www.wheesh.com

NE shopping



GLASS ACT: colourful designs from Serendipity



Art and food sit side-by-side in a new North-East gallery. **CHRISTEN PEARS** reports

NE window shopping

THE WHITE STUFF

WHATEVER your personal style, a palette of soft off-whites is ideal for creating a comfortable, spacious look in your home. Now Arthouse, a leading wallcovering design studio, has launched its minimalist Madison Collection. Available in stylish white and cream, it has a subtle textural appearance with a delicate shimmering scrolled design element within.

There are two ranges, Madison Block for the very utmost in contemporary minimalist design, and Madison Scroll, which has a slightly more



classical twist. Around £12.99 per 10m roll, from Focus and other leading retailers nationwide. For stockist enquiries, call 01706 239600.

BRAIN GAME

WHAT do William Shakespeare, Elvis Presley, Marcel Marceau and Albert Einstein have in common? Well, apart from being rather famous, they would make the best Cranium team ever.

Voted Game of the Year, Cranium is the perfect way to get together with your friends and have a roaring laugh. The game gives everyone the chance to shine, with 14 fun-fuelled activities ranging from impersonating celebrities, humming, miming, spelling backwards and sculpting objects

with super-cool Cranium clay. Taking about an hour to play, the object of Cranium is to get your team round the board, completing as many fun-packed tasks to reach Cranium Central where you have to complete all of the activities to be crowned as winners.

Cranium consists of four groups of activities: Creative Cat: can you sculpt beans on toast? Word Worm: can you spell 'asparagus' backwards? Data Head: who was the UK's first Eurovision Song Contest winner? Star Performer: can you impersonate the naked chef, Jamie Oliver?

With more than one million games sold, Cranium is the fastest selling independent game in history. £29.95 from Debenhams, John Lewis, Toys R Us, Virgin Megastores, WH Smith and other retailers nationwide,

www.playcranium.com



There is a real wealth of talent in the North-East but it isn't easy for people to get recognised

– artist and shop owner Maralyn O'Keefe

produced like you can buy in a supermarket," explains Maralyn.

Woven baskets hang from hooks in the ceiling, giving it a homely, cottagey feel and there is artwork throughout, even in the loo.

"It's all part of the feel and the atmosphere I wanted to create," says Maralyn, who's so interested in even the smallest details she's planning to make gingham lid covers for the jam jars.

Running the coffee shop has been a new experience for Maralyn, who confesses to being a complete amateur in the kitchen, but she has bought herself a library of cookery books and plans to make her own cakes and soups.

SERENDIPITY – the gift of making a fortunate discovery by accident – or in this case, a fabulous combination of art gallery and coffee shop in the centre of Wolsingham. It's difficult to tell which is more tempting: the home-made jams, chutneys and cakes or the glassware, silver jewellery and ceramics.

The gallery is the brainchild of glass artist Maralyn O'Keefe and her husband Ron, who already own the successful Glass and Art Gallery in Consett. They spotted their new premises quite by accident, while having a meal at a restaurant across the street.

"It wasn't part of our plans but we saw it and thought, 'Why not?' People were always saying to us at Consett that we should have a coffee shop but we simply didn't have the room. This was perfect – too good an opportunity to miss," says Maralyn.

Once the couple had decided to go ahead, they spent weeks agonising over the choice of name. The Glass and Art Gallery simply didn't convey the coffee shop aspect but then Maralyn came up with the idea of Serendipity.

"I was lying in bed one night and the word just popped into my head. I thought it meant pure good fortune. But I got up and looked it up in the dictionary to make sure. It fits perfectly."

Serendipity, a stone building right on the Market Place, was a tea rooms before the O'Keefes took over, and a draper's shop before that. An old-fashioned, glass fronted cabinet runs along the back of the coffee shop, stacked with honey, chutneys and preserves. There is also a tempting selection of cakes, biscuits, flapjacks, ice cream and fudge, even free range eggs. Everything is produced locally.

"It's all hand-made, nothing mass-

Happy accident



Generally though, Maralyn will be spending most of her time at Consett, where she has her workshop and studio, while Ron looks after things in Wolsingham, although she will be running stained glass-making courses like the ones already established at Consett.

The walls of the gallery are covered with drawings and paintings and the shelves are packed with ceramics and glass work, wooden boxes and greetings cards – all made by North-East artists. Regular visitors to The Glass and Art Gallery will recognise some of the names but Maralyn hopes there will eventually be no overlap between the artists in the two galleries. There are already half a dozen Weardale artists with work on show.

"The two galleries have very different atmospheres and I want the artwork to be different as well. I don't want it to be like a supermarket where it doesn't matter which branch you go into because it's all exactly the same," she says.

Some of the artists are professionals, including the internationally-renowned Sheila Mackie, but many are amateurs

whom Maralyn is keen to promote. Other than the occasional art and craft show, most have no outlet for their work. If they want to show in a gallery, they usually have to rent a space and pay commission and can end up losing money – something Maralyn, who worked as a PA before becoming a full-time artist, knows from first hand experience.

Many of the artists who have shown their work at the Consett gallery have gone on to become professional artists, like ex-miner Bill Hindmarsh, who turned up four years ago with a carrier bag full of pictures depicting life underground. He has since held exhibitions of his work across the country.

"There is a real wealth of talent in the North-East but it isn't easy for people to get recognised," says Maralyn. "We hope that what we're doing is changing that."

Serendipity, 10 Market Place,
Wolsingham, (01388) 526800.
The Glass and Art Gallery, 194
Medomsley Road, Consett, (01207) 583353.
Web site www.glassdesign.co.uk

WIN A WASHABLE DUVET SET

YOU can now enjoy the luxury of a natural duck down duvet with the convenience of home washability. Snuggledown has launched Wash & Dry Me, a sumptuous range of duck down duvets and pillows that can be washed and dried at home.

The Wash & Dry Me range can be safely washed in a domestic machine at 60°C and can be dried on both a line and in a tumble dryer. This is the first product of its kind in the UK, and as washing at 60°C eliminates dust mites from your bedding, it's a great step forward for people with allergies.

Snuggledown Wash & Dry Me range has a recommended retail price starting from £130 for a 10.5 tog double duvet and £60 for a pillow. The range is available in House of Fraser, Alders, Harrods, AIS, Fenwicks and all independent quality retailers. For more information log on to www.snuggledown.co.uk or call (01942) 402687.



HOW TO ENTER

The Northern Echo has teamed up with Snuggledown to offer a Wash & Dry Me duvet and pillow set worth £250 to one lucky winner. Just tell us what temperature you can wash the Snuggledown range at. Answers, by the end of the month, on a postcard or back of an envelope to Snuggledown Competition, NE Magazine, Features, The Northern Echo, Priestgate, Darlington DL1 1NF.

CHOCOLATE HEAVEN

GREEN & Black's has launched two new limited edition bars, which are 50 per cent bigger and contain 50 per cent more luxurious, organic ingredients. Those who like a fruity tang to their chocolate should indulge in the cherry bar – a tempting mix of full flavoured whole cherries, smothered in smooth dark chocolate with 60 per cent cocoa solids. The hazelnut, almond and Brazil nut bar is made using the company's darker shade of milk chocolate. Green & Black's source the finest organic ingredients to make the most luxurious, indulgent chocolate possible. Now available in major supermarkets, good health food stores and delicatessens, Kylie and Jerry Hall are both big fans of the range.



Pictures: CHRIS TINSLEY

NE window shopping

Don't let the Festival Fantasticon in association with Durham City Council gently present

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Gala
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BARBARA
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PANTOMIME



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: American red oak, yellow crab apples and Guelder Rose

The Northern Echo's Gardening Correspondent BRIGID PRESS loves the autumn hues of the horticultural centre where she spends her days

MOST people associate Nature's World with busy summer days, children buzzing around the site and floral fragrances bouncing out of every border. It certainly has the space and interest to keep two-year-olds to teenagers out of mischief for an afternoon.

For me though, the centre really comes into its own just after the return of the school timetable. There seems to be a restful, comfortable calm which settles on the site. Everything relaxes and breathes a sigh of summer departed.

It is not just the absence of inquisitive trampling feet. The light is more diffused and brings an air of softness to the trees, shrubs and grasses. There is a hint of a chill in the air, but it is still not yet winter coat time.

Autumn is a leisurely season. You just have to wander around at a much slower pace and take time to notice all the small details that are burnt out by summer's full sunshine.

This is the season when the beds and borders have lost most of their rainbow colours. They are now muted browns, straws and yellows. The colours are no longer competing with each other, but are at peace. Most stunning of all at the moment is a large group of hostas. The big glossy leaves have turned buttery ochre.

The Jerusalem sage has kept its muted, glaucous leaf colour, but the faded flower heads with their large, woody, pepper-pot seed heads help mould it into the autumn colour scheme. Unlike the crab apples. The brilliant red little sour apples drip from the branches like melting wax.

Further down the path stands a row of medlar trees. The dainty medieval trees are all heavily laden with unusual mottled brown fruit. These cannot be eaten yet. They have to be 'bletted' by a good dose of frost before the flesh becomes soft and sweet enough. The large lobed leaves, though, have taken on a rich camouflage of dark greens, rusts and oranges. As the sun sets on a bright afternoon, the last of the rays light up the leaves and you can truly imagine yourself to have been

whisked back in time to an age of mystery, magic and dragons.

There are large swathes of wild grasslands at Nature's World. These are areas that have been left untouched and unadulterated purely for the benefit of the wildlife.

Despite being located within a large town, there are regular sightings of skylarks, foxes, herons, pheasants, partridge, weasels and voles. An early morning walk will result in regular bursts of activity as the various birds and animals explode out from under cover. The pheasant's presence can be noticed by small circular depressions excavated from under small bushes. The even tinier bowls scratched out in the main pathway belong to the sparrows, and are where they bathe in the dust.

The 'well field' is a good site for spotting wildlife and wildflowers. This section

remains largely uncut as it houses the pipes that descend deep into the ground and, after a series of heat exchanges, heat up the hydroponicum. The pale blue petals of self-sown chicory flutter above feathery leaves of yarrow. The soft leaves of wild mallow shine out against the deep plum remains of dock clumps.

At the end of this path is a newly planted colony of small trees. This is where autumn will really come alive in years to come. The trees here have all been selected for their late season colour. The rowans stand proud, waving their delicate leaves and hang on to their white, pink, red, yellow and orange berries. The guelder rose is smothered in pearly, scarlet lipstick-coloured fruit. They won't last long. Once the weather turns that little bit cooler, the birds will have it stripped in days.

In amongst the trees are the papery

remains of teasels. They stand out starkly against a blue sky. In autumn they attract great flocks of gaudy coloured goldfinches, who babble away contentedly, just as I do as I wander around in the fading light of the day.

There may be more floral colour in spring and summer, but autumn is the season I like best at Nature's World.

Ask about Gardening, with Brigid Press and Tim Ellington, is on BBC Radio Cleveland, 95FM, every Sunday from 12-2pm. Send your gardening questions to be answered in The Northern Echo to Brigid at brigid@press67.freerve.co.uk or write to her c/o Nature's World, Ladgate Lane, Acklam, Middlesbrough.

Season of mists

PLANT OF THE MONTH

COLCHICUM (*Meadow saffron*)

THESE hardy bulbs originate from Persia, Afghanistan and Kurdistan and belong to the lily family (Liliaceae). They are grown mainly for their goblet-shaped flowers in various shade of pink and purple, which emerge before the leaves. They prefer an open sunny aspect with well-drained soil. In order to prevent the naked petals getting spoilt by rain splash, the best way to grow them is through short grass, or in a well gravelled rockery. The leaves must be allowed to fade naturally. All parts of the plant are highly toxic if ingested and contact may cause skin irritation. Despite (or because of) this,



the plant used to be harvested and used medicinally for its emetic properties.

Brigid Press

Read Brigid every Saturday in The Northern Echo



AUTUMN COLOUR: main picture, teasel; above, Rhus typhina

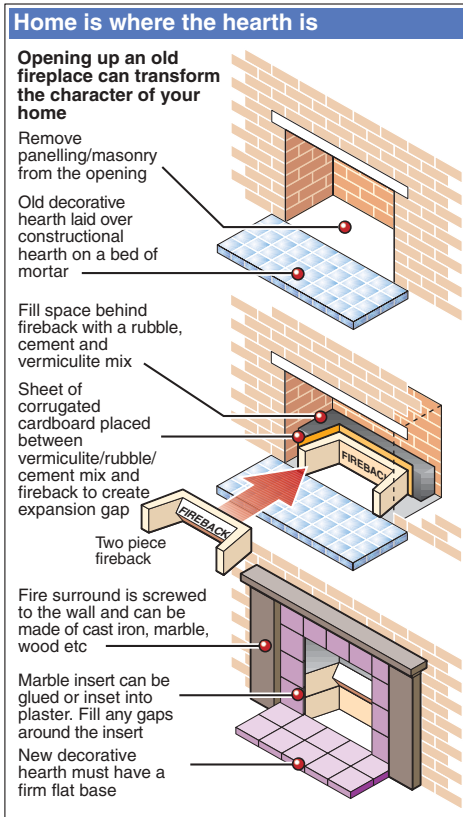
Pictures: DIRK VAN DER WERFF

NE d.i.y

IN ASSOCIATION WITH



Get the home fires burning



OPENING up an old fireplace can transform the character of your home. The glowing warmth of a real coal fire makes a natural focal point around which family and friends can relax in a cosy atmosphere.

It is one of life's little pleasures to sit beside a glowing coal fire on a winter's evening, one of the few things we can look forward to in the dark cold days ahead.

It also has practical advantages, as a real fire provides essential natural ventilation to help combat condensation, damp and mould. Even if the fire is artificial - gas coals or logs - it still beats looking at a radiator.

You do not need to be master craftsman to do the job of opening up a fireplace. Take a close look in your home to see if a fireplace has been bricked up at some time. There are four clues you can look for to determine whether or not a room in your house used to have a fireplace which has now been covered up.

First, of all look for a chimney. Most chimneys will have a chimney breast which protrudes into the room, but sometimes the internal room wall will be flat with the chimney protruding on the outside of the house.

Look for a ventilator. If a chimney has been closed up correctly, there should be a small ventilating grille or airbrick fitted on the internal wall. The reason for this is to allow air flow into the chimney to prevent condensation.

In front of a fireplace, there should be a concreted area. Even if the fireplace has been blocked up, the hearth will normally have been left in place and will be quite obvious if you remove the carpet in front of the area where you think the fireplace ought to be.

If a fireplace has been blocked off, an extra piece of skirting board will have been inserted in front of it. Careful inspection of the skirting board may reveal this extra length.

Once you have established that your

by RICHARD SPENCER

house does, indeed, have a blocked-off fireplace, the first step is to find out how it has been done.

Plasterboard or hardboard may simply have been added to a timber frame wedged into the old fireplace opening. Or bricks or concrete blocks may have been used to fill in the opening.

The method used should be obvious if there is a ventilator which you can remove and feel around through the gap. If there is no ventilator, tapping the wall should tell you - a boarded opening will sound hollow.

This is also a good time to check if the chimney is obstructed. Hold a lighted taper in front of the ventilator opening and see whether the flame is drawn towards the opening. If the flame is still, the chimney may be blocked or even capped off.

Once you have found the old fireplace, remove the section of skirting board in front of it. Remove either the plasterboard or the bricks used to block it up, taking great care not to damage anything.

Capped-off chimneys will need to be opened up. Chimneys that have a lean or those with poor mortar pointing will need to be repaired by a builder.

You should leave at least 24 hours after fitting a fireplace before the first fire is lit. The simplest types of open fires need only a grate. More sophisticated enclosed fires need to be sealed into the opening.

Finally, respect the environment and if you live in a smokeless zone, use the correct type of fuel.

QUICK FIX

Q Can I have a socket outlet in my bathroom?

A No - socket outlets should not be fitted in a bathroom except approved shaver sockets that conform to British standards.

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AUTUMN SPECIALS FOR THE COFFEE SHOP AND BISTRO

We have various special offers on leading up to Christmas **Senior Citizens** - Two for One for main meals on Wednesday's **Special 20% Discount on main meals** - Tuesday's & Thursday's, for anybody who tells us the name of our donkey as they arrive. His name is Jingle.

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We have started serving roast beef on Sunday's again as well as our usual extensive menu. Call to book your table to avoid disappointment.

CHRISTMAS PARTY BOOKINGS

We are once again open for evening group bookings leading up to Christmas. We can accommodate groups of 15 up to 56 people. They will have exclusive use of the Peel House, including the speciality food shop and the gift shop.

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CHRISTMAS SHOPPING

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NE fashion IN ASSOCIATION WITH



It's not just adults who like to wear designer labels. **CHRISTEN PEARS** finds out what the best-dressed children will be wearing this autumn



Small talk

WHEN it comes to children's clothes, we're a fairly traditional bunch - blue for boys and pink for girls are still firm favourites with parents and children alike. But there are some youngsters who won't be seen in anything less than the latest designer styles.

V-Elvet, in Durham City, stocks a large range of designerwear for children. Tucked away at the foot of Elvet Bridge, it is owned by Fiona Kaley, a former educational psychologist. As a mother of two, Fiona has always been interested in children's clothes. Her mother-in-law used to run a shop for nearly-new children's clothes in Sunderland and in August last year, she opened her own store.

"I used to live in Scotland and I started looking into the idea with a friend. We went quite a long way but then we both ended up moving because of our husband's jobs," she explains.

"I started working as an educational psychologist in the North-East but when my contract came to an end, I decided to go back to the idea of a shop. It was something I had always wanted to do and this seemed like the perfect opportunity."

V-Elvet caters for both girls and boys up to the ages of eight and nine.

The rails and shelves are tightly packed with everything from tiny socks and hats to jeans and jackets. There are cute T-shirts and woollens for the younger ones, as well as funky customised denims for the more fashion-conscious, older children.

Fiona says: "It is really hard to know what stock to go for because there is so much to choose from. We work on the basis that people want something different. You don't want your children going round in something that everyone else has."

There are a lot of continental brands on offer but Fiona has discovered her customers prefer traditional styling. "The French and Italian manufacturers have to make special brands for the British market because we're quite cautious. People still like blue for little boys and the children like them too. Little girls love pink. Some won't wear anything else."

V-Elvet stocks a range of designers, including Marese, Osh Kosh, Pampolina and Magilla. Fiona has focused on children's brands, rather than adult labels, although she does sell Paul Smith and will be introducing DKNY next season.

"My perception is that parents aren't bothered about a particular brand or label. They would rather have something a bit unusual, although there are some who are real label fanatics.

"They can be a bit pricey. We had a Paul Smith



ABOVE, LEFT TO RIGHT

- Georgia:** pink cord jacket and trousers by Magilla, 7-9 years
- Hannah:** Pampolina black skirt with beading and belt (coordinating jacket available), 5-7 years.
- Matilda:** Catimini brown velvet dress, 4-6 years (coat also available)
- Mia:** Marese boucle hat and coat and coordinating pieces, 3-5 years
- Matthew:** jeans, jacket and rugby shirt by Bo Dean, 2-6 years
- Grant:** jeans and sweatshirt by Magilla boys, 6-8 years

roaring dinosaur T-shirt last season which cost £40 but it was very popular."

Fiona buys most of her stock at trade fairs and was recently in Florence.

"It's absolutely amazing. You see all the big designer names, Versace, Armani, Trusardi. The Trusardi children's shop was unbelievable - just one outfit in the window under a spotlight. They take their children's fashion very seriously over there."

While she does not stock those labels herself, she says the trade fairs are excellent places to pick up ideas. As with adult clothes, trends filter down from the catwalk to children's ranges, although they tend to be a season or two behind.

For girls, chocolate and dusky pink will be big this autumn, while for boys, graffiti prints are strong. Fiona says: "There are some children who get into fashion at a very early age but most of them won't really know what's in and what's not, especially the younger ones. It's usually the mums who want to dress their children in something particular. Having said that, it's always the children who have the last word."

"There are some things they just won't wear. It may be that they don't like a particular colour or that girls don't want to wear trousers. Even at a young age, they can have a very firm idea of their own style."

● V-Elvet, 5 New Elvet, Durham City, 0191-386 8685.



"We work on the basis that people want something different. You don't want your children going round in something everyone else has"



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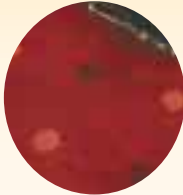
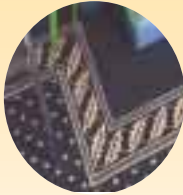
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me and my wardrobe



STANDING OUT FROM THE CROWD: from top, Deborah's favourite gilet from Oasis; an off-the-shoulder Diva top; black top with fur collar, also from Diva; Mango skirt and top with buckles

Picture:
SARAH NICHOLSON

Deborah Allen is the owner of Darlington's Nailbar 1. Passionate about fashion, she has a penchant for black and a secret wardrobe in the attic, where she stashes her latest purchases

How would you describe your look?
Modern, stylish, unique. I wear a lot of black, although I have recently started to introduce a bit of colour. I never do casual and I always have colour co-ordinated nails and diamante toes.

What's your favourite item of clothing?
A suede and fur gilet from Oasis. I love

it and I always get compliments when I'm wearing it.

What's your worst fashion buy?

A pair of black, hipster trousers with white piping on the pockets at the front. When you sit down, they make you have a builder's bum and the white piping makes you look as if you have builder's thighs as well. Horrendous.

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

I paid £600 for a Zuccaro body which had gemstones all over it. (I know, but it was the 80s). I loved it and wore it a lot.

Where do you shop?

I shop at three places: Diva in Yarm, H&M in Newcastle and Mango in York. I go a bit further afield because I don't like wearing anything that other people

would have. I've been to functions where someone else has got the same thing on.

Which celebrity's style do you admire most and why?

It can only be Audrey Hepburn – chic, sophisticated, all woman, that little black dress. What more can I say?

Nailbar 1, 7 Northumberland Street, off Grange Road, Darlington. Tel (01325) 483486

“I never do casual and have colour co-ordinated nails and diamante toes

NE beauty IN ASSOCIATION WITH **Saks**

A day spa is the perfect way to recharge your batteries, as **CHRISTEN PEARS** finds out when she visits the Academy Spa



Total indulgence...

WITH all the stresses and strains of modern life, it is becoming increasingly difficult to find time for relaxation. Even a long soak in a hot bath can be tricky when the kids are demanding attention and you have a huge pile of ironing to get through for the next day.

One way to guarantee some time to yourself is to visit a day spa. With all the facilities of a residential spa, day spas offer the opportunity for a whole day, or even just a couple of hours, of health and beauty treatments.

The Academy Spa in Harrogate was opened in 1994 and has won numerous awards. It was voted Best Day Spa in the British Beauty Awards 2000 and is once again competing for the award this year.

The spa is housed in an enormous stone building with soaring glass windows. It is beautifully designed, with slate floors, natural timbers, zen pictures, aromatherapy oils and gentle new age music all combining to create a tranquil atmosphere.

The choice of treatments is vast, including facials and massages, manicures and pedicures and famous names include Elemis and Matis for face and body and Jessica for hands and nails.

But the Academy Spa is much more than somewhere to simply relax and be pampered. It has merged the philosophies of East and West to offer an holistic approach to health and beauty that induces a sense of total wellbeing on several different levels – physical, emo-

tional and spiritual. Alternative therapies, such as shiatsu massage, reiki and kinesiology, are offered alongside the more traditional face and body treatments.

Clients can book single treatments or combine them into day or half day programmes. The best way to sample the spa is to try one of its day packages, which include lunch plus use of the facilities – swimming pool, sauna, steam room and gym.

The personalised programmes blend high technology with traditional techniques and luxury products made from organically and wild grown plants, marine extracts and essential oils to protect, purify and relax.

New packages include Pure Indulgence, Luxury Spa, Detox and Invigorate, and Health and Fitness. For the men, there are both Energiser and Chill Out packages.

I opted for Ultimate Relaxation, which included a dry float, facial, massage and pedicure, and really did live up to its name.

I started off with a dry float. It's an ingenious idea. You lie on a water-filled bed, separated from the water by a platform and a plastic skin. The platform drops away, leaving you floating. It's an incredibly relaxing sensation (so relaxing I fell asleep) and, when the platform comes up underneath your back at the end, you realise just how comfortable you have been.

This was followed by an Elemis facial, tailored for my skin, an aromatherapy



massage, and the day ended with a pedicure. I didn't feel quite energetic enough to try the gym and swimming pool but I did feel totally relaxed.

It's an incredibly indulgent experience, and the perfect opportunity to escape a stressful job or busy home life. Treat yourself – or better still, get someone else to treat you.

● Academy Spa day packages start at £90. For more information, call (01423) 524060 or visit the website at www.academyspa.com

Diary of a hair and make-up artist

ALLISON MCKAY

THE beauty industry is bombarded with new and technically scientific products every day. I am often sent products to try out on shoots. A lot of the scientific jargon goes straight over my head. What I want to know is: what does it claim to do and does it work?



You only have to look at the back of a moisturising cream... It takes someone with a degree in chemistry to understand fully what these AHAs and avobenzones mean. Maybe that is why we are increasingly turning to natural, organic skin care products.

Sometimes there is a danger of people taking this whole organic thing too literally – a very beautiful, but slightly bohemian model I used to work with regularly claimed she kept her skin looking good by splashing her face with her urine every morning. Yuck! The fact that she was only 21 years old probably accounted more for her good skin. I am sure after a while splashing a form of acid on the face would not be beneficial, and the fragrance certainly wouldn't be very becoming.

Now we are hearing about "organic make-up". Not so long ago I was working backstage at the High Street Fashion Awards with a team of hair and make-up artists when we were given a range of mineral make-up by **bareEscentuals**, which claimed to be the only range in the world that was "100 per cent pure". This slightly unnerved me, as time doesn't allow for mistakes made by not knowing a product. We were given a brief explanation of how the product worked and got on with it and I have to say the results were fab. bareEscentuals say they use micronised (very tiny) minerals with nothing added, no preservatives, oil, fragrance and other chemicals.

When I picked up the tub of powdered foundation to use on one of my models she said she needed a cream foundation base, but after swirling the brush around a small amount of bareEscentuals powder, then tapping it on the side followed by a buffing action of the brush onto the skin, her complexion looked flawless and glowing. We were impressed. Apparently you can even sleep with this make-up on and you won't break out in spots, as it doesn't clog pores.

The range consists of lipsticks, blushers, eye shadows and mascaras. The only downside is they can get a bit messy because the powder is so light and fine. You can get the range from leading salons nationwide. For further information call 0870 850 6655.

TOP TIPS

● If you're considering a hair dye, always have a skin test first. Toni & Guy, and I am sure many other reputable salons, will not apply a hair dye where skin contact is made if the client has not had a skin test within the last three months.

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. See advert in NE Directory on page 23.



If you stick to an holistic health programme, you could sail through winter in wonderful health and have bags more energy as well.
CHRISTINE FIELDHOUSE tries it out

WITH the long sunny days of summer gone, it is very tempting to curl up on the sofa with crisps and chocolate and wait for New Year to re-start those resolutions. But autumn is the best time to change your life, according to experts.

As a mum who now suffers every cold and infection her son brings home from playgroups and nursery from November until May, I decided to give an holistic health programme a month's trial. As far as energy goes, I'm very active, but I wondered how much of my zest was fuelled by adrenaline and how much was natural energy. I had one or two minor health problems – an upset tummy and a very stiff neck and shoulders – and I hadn't been sleeping well for months.

The system is called BEAM, an abbreviation of Bosiger Energy Alignment Method, and claims to re-tune the body's energy, allowing it to strengthen, rejuvenate and heal. I had two appointments with Fiona Slatter, a BEAM co-founder, along with Carol Bosiger, and we started by assessing my energy levels, state of mind and general health, all of which can be affected by overwork, poor diet and unhappiness.

"Autumn is the best time to make changes," explains London-based Fiona. "People usually start in January and they never do it because they are so down in the dumps. All their good intentions are destroyed at the first hurdle and they just want something to please them."

"What you do in autumn will carry you through winter. You won't get the January blues because your body is healthier and you won't want to overindulge at Christmas because you're already feeling fitter. It's about learning what works for you and what doesn't."

BEAM is based on the principle that any imbalance in the physical, mental or emotional state occurs as a result of a reduction in the circulation of the body's natural energy flow. As we chatted, it



The BEAM machine: clears energy blocks by eliminating toxins. Pads are attached to various points on the body

BEAM me up, Fiona

became clear that my diet was healthy, but I wasn't getting enough relaxation. One or two solutions – like a night out now and then – seemed like common sense, but I hadn't thought them through until Fiona made me stop and think.

As Fiona analysed my health, she prepared the BEAM machine and put compression pads on my feet, legs, hands and neck to start clearing energy blocks by eliminating toxins. The suction pads were strong and left bruises, but by increasing energy flow, they are said to remove backache, neck pain and shoulder problems.

Fiona gave me my diet guidelines for the fortnight until my next session with her. These are tailored for each patient but I was advised to cut out wheat and dairy to ease my digestive problems. The general rules are:

- Eat organic produce
- Avoid all preservatives, flavourings and colourings
- Avoid refined carbohydrates
- Avoid stimulants

- Eat a main meal before 8pm
- Aim for eight hours sleep per night
- Do not use microwave ovens
- Use only extra virgin olive oil
- Eat every three to four hours
- Eat warm food in winter and cold food in summer
- Drink pure water only

On the BEAM programme, breakfast is the most important meal of the day and choices include oat or millet porridge made with water, sheep's or goat's milk, rice or oat milk. Sheep or goat's yoghurt, eggs, turkey bacon, kippers or haddock, or rice cakes or oat cakes are other breakfast options.

Fiona recommended a mid-morning snack of almonds, cashews, walnuts or pecans, or pumpkin, sunflower or sesame seeds. Sprouted grains, vegetable soup or rice cakes or vegetables with goat's or sheep's cheese were another option. Citrus fruit was to be avoided but apples, pears and mangoes were acceptable.

Lunch must contain protein (chicken, fish, nuts, seeds, sprouted grains, sushi, goat's or sheep's cheese or yoghurt) and vegetables (salad, stir fry, soup, roast vegetables, casserole) and, if required, a small amount of carbohydrate (potato, rice, noodles, rice cakes and oat cakes).

A mid-afternoon snack similar to the mid-morning one is recommended, and dinner should include vegetables, protein and some carbohydrate, similar to lunch. Problem sleepers should increase carbohydrate content, especially brown rice; dieters should reduce carbohydrates.

Recommended drinks include herbal tea, especially fennel and ginger, coffee substitutes, pure water (room temperature in winter) or diluted apple or mango juice. If you drink spirits, vodka and whisky are best and should be well-diluted and good quality, preferably organic wines, would work best.

- Other tips for a healthy winter are:
- Keep the feet and the kidneys warm.

- Wear socks and tights as cold feet chill the body, leaving it susceptible to circulating bugs.
- Support the lungs with good mineral supplements.
- For cooler mornings, choose a hot breakfast. Drink plenty of hot fluids.
- Have a hot meal at night and keep any cold food for lunch when the day is at its warmest.

● Make sure your diet contains plenty of vegetables, seeds, chicken, fish, beans and pulses and avoid sugar, wheat and stimulants so you eliminate solid waste at least once a day.

My verdict?

I was very sceptical about the toxin elimination... until I got a whiff of smelly feet on the train on the way home, and I realised they were my normally fragrant tootsies!

I found it hard eliminating dairy and wheat from my diet, but cutting back considerably reduced my digestive problems and now, two months on, they've gone completely. I used goat's and soya milk wherever possible, and found myself reading far more labels on food. However, I found it very hard to stick to the rules when eating out.

I was pleasantly surprised at the price and availability of organic food and I discovered the gluten-free section in supermarkets. I have even grown to like rye bread. Organic rice and oat cakes have become my late-evening snack instead of chocolate but I have yet to discover the joys of organic wine.

I have now reintroduced a little wheat and dairy, but I have learnt that when I feel my energy depleting, I can cut back and start to feel better almost instantly. I also lost a couple of pounds on this regime and feel much less bloated after meals now. I haven't been ill while practising the regime – and my fingers are crossed...

What you do in autumn will carry you through winter. You won't get the January blues because your body is healthier and you won't want to overindulge at Christmas because you're already feeling fitter



Can eating mostly proteins or carbohydrates help people lose weight and become healthier? Three women report back on the metabolic typing diet

'Typing' expert:
Tracy Cordell



Take three slimmers

AS guinea pigs go, you couldn't get three more different people to put the metabolic typing diet to the test. As reported in last month's NE, the diet is based on finding the best foods for each individual based on three "metabolic types" – "protein" or "meat" types; "carbohydrate" types or a mix of both.

Tracy and Phil Cordell at Fit for You, in Chester-le-Street, County Durham, can find a person's "type" via detailed questionnaires and also offer a lifestyle overhaul which includes gathering sleep and food diaries, and a one and a half hour one-on-one assessment. Their three guinea pigs were:

LINDA JENNINGS. Aged 54, Linda had watched her weight creep up despite sticking rigidly to a low fat diet, felt lethargic and had aching joints. She emerged as a carbohydrate type.

ARIFA AKBAR. A 31-year-old vegetarian, Arifa had trouble sleeping, wanted to lose weight, gain energy and stop binge eating. She was astounded to learn she was a protein type, and, for the first time in 20 years, had to include mostly meat in her diet, like the Atkins diet.

LINDSAY JENNINGS. A 31-year-old Northern Echo journalist from Darlington, Lindsay felt lethargic and had been suffering from regular headaches and aching joints. She was a mixed type.

The three women put the diet to test, sticking to their "metabolic types" and avoiding alcohol, coffee and tea and processed foods for a month.

So how did they get on?



LINDA

IHAD been on a permanent low fat diet during the past couple of years and I was still finding it difficult to lose weight. In fact, my weight had crept up.

Through the results of the Metabolic Type Testing Questionnaire I completed, I was advised to cut out pasta (very difficult), carrots, bananas, salmon, and whenever possible ensure that the food I ate was organic, no processed foods. I also had to drink two litres of water a day and cut down on my tea and coffee intake.

Within a week I felt I had more energy and as an added bonus, I lost 2lbs. This was amazing as I had been eating food that was really filling. At the end of the

trial I felt fitter, healthier, the aches and pains I had been experienced had all but disappeared and I had lost seven pounds.

Since the trial I have kept to the eating pattern, it is not difficult. I drink lots more water and have just one cup of tea a day. My weight has stabilised with no apparent effort. The only difficulty is finding a variety of organic food at reasonable prices.



ARIFA

MY reaction to the diet is mixed. Although I find I now sleep a lot better, I did gain 5lbs in weight. I found the banning of some foods restrictive and although I tried to avoid them I did end up turning to high-sugar junk food – although this has been a problem for me for a number of years. I was advised to take special supplements to help with my cravings but I did not want to resort to them. It was also difficult converting to meat after years being a vegetarian.

But the diet did improve my health in some unexpected ways. Drinking more water and cutting out processed foods has made me feel healthier. Although I continued to binge, I did feel fuller after a meal and to my unexpected delight my skin is much clearer. I had tried everything for my problem skin over the years so it was great that changing my eating habits cleared up eczema rashes and acne. That said, I am going to stick with it and continue to eat a natural, high protein diet – including eating meat.



LINDSAY

OUT of the three guinea pigs, I probably had the easiest eating plan to stick to – a balanced mix of both proteins and carbohydrates. It was suggested that my love of red wine and coffee was cancelling out the effects of much of the water I was drinking, leaving me dehydrated. It's likely this played a part in my headaches and aching joints.

Avoiding alcohol, tea and coffee was easier than I thought and by the first week the headaches went. I was sleeping better and I had more energy.

It was sometimes difficult to ensure I was "balancing" my meals with the right portion of protein and carbohydrates, but it meant I could tuck into poached egg, a full meat sausage or bacon and tomatoes for breakfast without guilt.

I felt satisfied after many of my meals and noticed when I hadn't got the balance right, ie eaten too little protein, I felt hungry soon afterwards. After a while I also stopped craving chocolate and a month later I had lost five pounds in weight and the aches in my joints had disappeared.

Even though I slowly strayed back to my old habits after the trial, I soon switched back when the headaches and joint niggles returned.

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

LIFE COACH

CHANGE: MAKE EACH DAY A NEW BEGINNING

FALLING leaves, beautiful changing colours and a fresh chill in the air. Seasons are nature's reminder to us that change is really an integral part of life.

We can't avoid change, yet we so often try to. "I'm OK really, the job, our health, partner, etc., etc., isn't that bad." Or worse "they'll change, it will just take a bit more time."

Meanwhile our spirits droop and our energy falls. That wonderful life, job, healthy body we keep promising

ourselves just doesn't seem to materialise. There's no avoiding it, the change starts with you.

We avoid making changes mainly because they seem so scary. The outcome is uncertain and, yes, you might fail. But there is excitement in the unknown. Dare to try something new each day. Renew your promises to yourself about what you want in your life and learn to love change.



Juliette Lee
Juliette is available at
www.sunflowercoaching.com

NE slimming

When you get a snack attack...

PEOPLE often find nibbling between meals one of the most difficult urges to control. However, snacking itself is not a problem (most of us now tend to have smaller meals and snack in between), you simply need to be careful about what you are snacking on.

Fruit is great as a snack as it's healthy, delicious and easy to digest. If you need something more substantial, try to opt for a snack that will provide a relatively slow release of energy, such as oatcakes. All the following snacks are under 50 calories. You can have two snacks a day, but try to make one of them fresh fruit.

- Simple snacks
 - Piece of fruit: 1 apple, pear, orange, kiwi fruit, handful of grapes, etc.
 - Oatcake and cheese: one oatcake spread with one tablespoon of low fat cheese spread.
 - Fruit yogurt: 125g (4oz) tub of low fat fruit yogurt.
 - Crudites and dip: one carrot and ½ pepper cut into strips, one celery stick, two tablespoons virtually fat-free fromage frais mixed with some fresh coriander.
 - Raisins and seeds: 2 tablespoons raisins mixed with one teaspoon sunflower seeds and 1 tablespoon pumpkin seeds.
 - Bruschetta: toast a 2cm (¾ inch) slice ciabatta bread spread with one tablespoon tomato puree and top with one thin fresh slice of parmesan and some fresh basil.
 - Rice cake and peanut butter: one rice cake spread with one teaspoonful peanut butter.
 - Dried fruit: three apricots and three prunes (the French ones are good) or dates.
 - Crispbread and tzatziki: two crispbreads spread with one tablespoon each of tzatziki.
 - Bagel and cheese: ½ bagel topped with two tablespoons low-fat cottage cheese.
- Taken from Nicki Waterman's Flat Stomach Plan: the ultimate abdominal workouts and diet (Thorsons, £7.99).**
GMTV's fitness presenter explains how to get fatter, firmer abs fast.

EASY CALORIE SWAPS

Replace	With	Calories saved
1oz cheese	1/2oz very strong cheese	10-70
oil for cooking	oil spray	120 per tbsp
pain au chocolate	2 slices wholemeal toast with Marmite or similar spread	100
buttered/sweet popcorn	salted popcorn	95 per 75g portion
crisps	Twiglets or similar low-fat snacks	50 per 25g bag
2 chocolate biscuits	2 rice cakes with jam	60
shop-bought meat lasagne	vegetable lasagne	173 per 420g portion
chicken korma	chicken tikka	230 per 350g portion
chocolate bar	breakfast or cereal bar	150
cola	water	136 per 330ml can
creamy fruit yogurt	very low fat yogurt	119 per 150g pot
1 pint of lager	1 glass dry white wine	74
1 glass fruit juice	1 glass half juice/half water	50

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gadget man



It's small, but packs a mighty punch

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

Phones have been getting smarter for years but 2004 could be when they finally replace the office Filofax once and for all. NIGEL BURTON looks to the future

I've always enjoyed a healthy scepticism about mobile phones that promise the earth. Call me a techno luddite but, until now, the only thing I've needed a mobile for was to speak to people while I'm on the road.

Phones that combined the best features of a PDA (personal digital assistant) are nothing new. I actually owned the very first of these devices – Nokia's 9000 Communicator. It looked like your average mobile (maybe a bit bigger) but the chassis split apart to reveal a keyboard and a full-sized monochrome screen.

As well as the usual phone options, the Communicator also offered a fax, rudimentary web browsing, e-mail and a jotter. No wonder it cost a cool £1,000 when it went on sale six years ago. Today, anyone who uses a Communicator is asking for trouble. Take the size of the thing; the 9000 was big for a mobile in 1996, now it looks gargantuan. Use it for simply making a call and people are apt to look at you with a mixture of bemusement and pity. For what was a cutting edge device a short while ago, the Nokia looks laughably old fashioned these days.

Every mobile you can buy includes some form of memory to store phone numbers and basic reminders. I always find them a pain, though, for the simple reason that without a keyboard entering anything even approaching a sentence takes an absolute age, even with T9 predictive texting (for the uninitiated T9 tries to guess the word you want before you finish pressing the keys – it's good, but not that good).

So when Orange asked me to try the latest convergent handset, I approached it with a healthy degree of scepticism.

The Sony Ericsson P800 has been out for a couple of months now. With an Orange contract it costs less than an equivalent Pocket PC PDA.

Interestingly, the P800 eschews Microsoft's PPC operating system in favour of Symbian – an OS written specifically for phones and spun off from EPOC, the system used by Psion for its Series 5 and 7 organisers a few years back.

The P800 therefore gives PDA lovers a tantalising glimpse of what might have been had Psion not thrown in the towel.

In fact, the P800 may be small but it packs a mighty punch. It's a tri-band handset that supports multi-media messaging (texting with pictures and music) plus the ubiquitous polyphonic ringtones so your loved one can call you up to the Hawaii Five O theme tune or whatever.

Java support allows for the downloading of programmes from the Net and there's 12MB of memory plus an aperture for a Sony Memory Stick (mine came with a 16MB card) so you have room to install the free games and apps that come on the included CD ROM.

That storage space can also be occupied by MP3 tunes or digital pictures taken on the built-in 640x480 digital camera. The little Sony also plays back MPEG 4 video files so you can watch trailers for movies, your favourite Premiership goals or even download a whole film onto a Memory Stick for multi-media on the go.

Configuring the P800 to access my e-mail account was a piece of cake. Just enter name, password and the number to call and the handset does the rest.

Certainly I soon found my entire life revolving around the little Sony. All my calendar details went into it and during conferences I could e-mail my colleagues so they could be working on stories we had agreed to cover before I returned to the office. Heck even the camera came in handy for taking pictures. The games and video replay were great for showing off but, really, the P800 is a killer business device not an expensive Game Boy Advance.

The screen is ample (208x320 pixels) and there's a flip-up keypad for users who prefer to press a button when they dial a number. When it flipped open I couldn't help but think of Captain Kirk's communicator in Star Trek. Sony reckons the battery life is an impressive 400 hours in standby and 13 hours talktime. Certainly I found the lithium ion cell had to be topped up every three days just to be on the safe side.

The P800 changed my mind about so-called "Smartphones". Originally I had dismissed the idea of an all-in-one device as pointless. Now I don't think I could be without my P800 (which is going to cause me grief when Orange ask for it back).

And while the Sony may be the best on the market, it's by no means the only such device.

Buyers on a budget could do worse than try the Orange SPV, a dinky handset that uses the Microsoft PPC OS. It costs roughly half the Sony's price but you do give up handwriting recognition, a built-in camera and Blue-tooth wireless support.

Others are coming soon and I've no doubt that in six years time the P800 will look as antiquated as my Nokia 9000 Communicator does in 2003. For now, though, the Sony represents the state of the art.

EATING OUT

JUDGES COUNTRY HOUSE HOTEL, YARM



THE jury has been out on Judges and the verdict is a stylish new menu that will appeal to both palate and pocket.

The hotel's general manager, Tim Howard, who came to the post only last month, put it succinctly. "We wanted to bring in a new menu that would suit people who come to the hotel, so we just asked them what they wanted. It was as simple as that."

Judges' restaurant, which, under new head chef Jason Whitelock has just been awarded three AA rosettes, already has an enviable reputation for its Conservatory menu but now has widened its appeal with the new table d'hôte choice.

The hotel itself certainly has much to recommend it. Set in 22 acres of gardens and woodland, the house, formerly the home of the Richardson engineering family of Hartlepool, was latterly a country lodging for visiting circuit court judges – hence the name. And the country house atmosphere is still there to be enjoyed, especially as you sit back on the sofas of the beautiful drawing room, nibbling the complimentary canapés while taking your time to study the menu.

OUR CHOICE

To start, I choose king prawn brochette, with cous cous salad and chilli dressing. When Judges say king prawns, they mean it. Drizzled with the sweet chilli, they were almost a meal in themselves. My partner's choice, a warm salad of lambs' kidneys with pancetta, apple and pinenuts was equally delicious and generous.

Superlative would be the best way to describe the fillet of Dales beef I choose for my main course. Served quite rare, it had a melt-in-the-mouth texture and a flavour of hay meadows. It came with a fricassée of wild mushrooms, asparagus and a port sauce.

Peter's whole char-grilled sea bass, a plateful in itself, was delightfully delicate and perfectly accompanied by garlic mash and crisp vegetables.

For pudding Peter choose the raspberry crème brûlée (which passed his 'can you skate on it?' test) while I went for the crepes suzette with vanilla ice cream, which, apart from being totally delicious, had the added bonus of watching the amazing pyrotechnics as they were prepared at our table.

THE COST

£22.50 for two courses; £24.95 for three courses.

Peta King



READER OFFER

Judges are offering a half bottle of wine with lunch or dinner per table for all readers who mention this article when booking.

Judges Country House Hotel, Kirklevington



Hot on the trail of the hamper man



The Gourmet House and Durham Hampers offer a wide selection of fine cuisine. CHRISTEN PEARS reports

THE Gourmet House isn't difficult to find. The smell of fresh curry wafts up through Durham's indoor market and, like one of the Bisto Kids, I follow my nose.

A few seconds later, I find myself in front of a stall where the shelves are overflowing with pickles, jams, mustards and chutneys. There are biscuits, pastas, breads and cakes, teas, coffees and fruit juice, as well as freshly ground coffee. And there, in a silver dish, over a burner, is the curry – and it tastes as delicious as it smells.

The Gourmet House was started last year by former chef Stuart Alsop. Originally from Lanchester, he worked in Harrogate for several years before moving to Sunderland.

"Unfortunately, not long after I moved, I got made redundant. I still had a real passion for food but I didn't want to go back to being a chef so I started looking round for something else to do," he says.

The result was The Gourmet House – a tiny but incredibly well-stocked delicatessen. Most of the products are from local suppliers – Lanchester fruit juices, Taylor's of Harrogate tea and coffee and cakes from Jenkins and Hustwit of Bishop Auckland. There are always tastings and new products for customers to try.

"I believe in the quality of everything I stock so I'm passionate about what I'm selling. We're always trying to inspire people to try something a little bit different. Chilli jam is one of our most popular. People aren't quite sure at one but everyone who has tried it has come back for more."

The freshly made curry sauces are particularly popular, with customers travelling from as far afield as

Sunderland and Northumberland to stock up. Made to exacting standards, they contain no artificial flavourings or preservatives.

Stuart works with other food retailers in the city – butchers, fishmongers and fellow chef Joe Keenan, who runs the Food Shop on Claypath – to make sure their products don't overlap. They point customers in the right direction if they're looking for something in particular and are always on hand to offer recipe ideas and tips.

Earlier this year, Stuart decided to expand the business by setting up Durham Hampers. There are pre-packed hampers to suite every occasion and taste. Some come in baskets, others boxes, and there are also picnic hampers, complete with crockery. With names such as Gentlemen's Pleasure, Totally Organic and Some Like It Hot, they are filled with goodies from the deli. There is also a pick and mix service, which is proving extremely popular.

"Some people might see a particular hamper and love everything in it except one thing. They don't have to have it. They can choose something else instead or they can choose the hamper from scratch. We want them to choose something for a friend or relative that they know they're going to like," says Stuart.

This time of year is particularly busy as people start buying hampers for Christmas. As well as the usual products, there are Christmas chutneys, puddings and cakes.

Customers can choose their hampers either at the stall or via the Internet. They can also buy individual products from the deli and by registering with the Food Lovers Club, they receive regular updates and free recipes to download.



QUALITY TREAT: Stuart Alsop, main picture, with some of his wares

"We're always trying to inspire people to try something a little bit different. Chilli jam is one of our most popular."

Stuart says: "We're just passionate about what we do and the food we sell and what we want our customers to feel the same about what they buy. There's a huge range out there and we want to bring it to as many people as possible."

● For more information about The Gourmet House or Durham Hampers, call 0191-375 7511 or visit the website at www.durhamhampers.co.uk.

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NE connections



Homeward bound... and that boot is full: from left, the author, 'George' and 'Harris'.
Main picture: the Racing Green limousine that turned French heads

Three men in a Jag

Three Men in a Boat by Jerome K. Jerome was published in 1889 (1). It is a classic, colourful and amusing account of a river boating holiday – adventures and misadventures – of three chums accompanied by a fictitious dog called Montmorency. The story has been turned into movies on three occasions in the last 50 years. One hundred and fourteen years later, DAVID KELLY and two companions 'George' (Peter Rowley) and 'Harris' (Ian Clarke) (2) set off – and report – in the same late-Victorian spirit...

THE three of us had been agreed: a short break would fortify us for the demands of the coming winter. But, unlike our illustrious predecessors, we had no stomach for a boating holiday, the heatwave having given way to the usual vagaries of an early English autumn.

But it was more than serendipity that turned our minds to the nearly-discarded invitation from our good friend Vardy to avail ourselves of the opportunity of an excursion in one of his luxury Jaguar (3) motor vehicles.

While we had responded that such a limousine might forever remain beyond the reach of our combined purses, it was felt appropriate to make a constructive proposal: perhaps we should take one for a spin to the Loire Valley in France and ascertain how much of the prodigious 470-litre luggage compartment might be filled with wine...?

A jest, it was not; nor taken as such. For within the shortest space of time we were steering a splendid top-of-the-range Jaguar XJR (4.2 litre supercharged) on to a somewhat less agreeable or commodious ferry.

We had not reached the vessel without some misadventure. Indeed, even before we set forth we studied our travelling bags packed into the boot and reflected ruefully that there was barely room for a jeroobam. We had over-provided as usual and perhaps Harris had been right to dismiss as unnecessary the scribing of lists of travelling requisites. "Just underpants and socks", he had declared (though, it must be recorded, his was the largest piece of luggage...). At least we had been able to persuade George to leave behind his clockwork Montmorency, largely on the grounds that his 'dog', while obedient, was by no stretch of the imagination, a fox-terrier.



The closure of part of the M1 found us disoriented and utterly lost in the midst of Walsall, having only the vaguest notion of which turning led to Portsmouth. Time was pressing. Our inbuilt satellite companion proved of limited assistance: we were inexperienced with its operation and puzzled by proposed highways changing from blue to green. For once we took the advice of Harris, who had more than a nodding acquaintance with the M6, and within a short time, we were powering effortlessly south. Harris quickly became lost in his book.

Our satellite adviser - of female, almost-sirenesque intonation - had persisted in trying to direct us to our port via London instead of by way of Oxford but, reflecting on this as we partook of something in the drinking line on our ferry, we accepted the probability of having programmed-in Oxford Street...

We quickly tired of the television in stationary passages but this was in large part because the England cricket team were being put to the sword. However, onlookers queuing at the port gazed in wonder and envy.

George, having elected himself to the role of recording and re-allocating our expenditure, was also counting how many heads were being turned by our vehicle's classic lines and a bonnet that housed an engine of enormous flexibility. It was, of course, more amusing to turn the heads of open-mouthed awestruck French folk studying our Racing Green limousine.

We chose the old roads south through Normandy and were constantly astonished with the ease with which we could pass the

dawdling masses. In truth, we were also astounded that this powerful vehicle was so sparing with its consumption of fuel, which George attributed to the light aluminium body in which we were cosseted with every conceivable aid to the safety of all occupants.

Our destination was a rather tired farmhouse (4) close to the Loire vineyards. It transpired that a colony of bees had already taken residence but given that they confined most of their activity to the kitchen chimney, George could continue to count beans rather than bees.

At our destination we disembarked unwearied by travel and swapped the comfort of our vehicle for this relatively rude and rustic accommodation. However, a hot water supply was available (albeit, as it transpired, only temporarily) and perhaps this was the one luxury that our vehicle's interior had appeared to lack. And, as we began the minor task of eating our way through mountains of cheese, meats, paté and bread (not overlooking a good dip in the wine lake), we looked forward to the following day and the primary purpose of our vacation.

Our guide was to be the redoubtable Réal Fleury, in whose veins, it must truly be said, wine flows (5). We partook of breakfast at his Saumur apartment: a refreshing glass of la bernache, the still-fermenting first wine from this year's harvest. At least its typical cloudiness ensured a small degree of essential roughage to start the day. Harris was privately alarmed by talk of its virtues as a laxative...

Our objective was mostly the fine reds of



A statue of St Vincent (patron saint of winegrowers) bore an uncanny resemblance to a Mr George Best, a well-known wine imbibor whose previous occupation, apparently, was the pursuit of a football

Saumur and Chinon though - perhaps a sign of the times - both George and Harris wanted to purchase white wine, allegedly to comfort their respective and pining spouses (gifts of inexpensive scents having obviously paled by now).

At the end of a long day in the vineyards, the irritating showers dried away and mellow sun fell on the Loire.

In retrospect, it is now possible to see how - and why - we had forgotten that even the prodigious luggage space of our Jaguar might be challenged by the addition of 120 litres of some of the best, truly affordable wines the Loire Valley can produce.

For even as we glazed over the bottles, bags and boxes before us, our minds overflowed not with relative cubic capacities but with experiences of extraordinary winegrowers and amazing caves (wine cellars)...

At René Noel Legrand's Varrains cellar where George and Harris, embarrassingly preoccupied with their white wine aspiration, fell completely for an obviously well-worked and crude patois about how, when you have 14 reds and only one white, you "take care of the dancing woman" - an allusion, supposedly, to a dance troupe where you set your attentions upon the only blonde;

In the highly-certificated Christophe Hallouin's Domaine des Frémonclaires cellar a statue of St Vincent (patron saint of winegrowers) bore an uncanny resemblance to a Mr George Best, a well-known wine imbibor whose previous occupation, apparently, was the pursuit of a football (a rough sport, by all accounts);

THE cathedral-like cellars of Chateau de la Fessardiere where, quite understandably, the Poitevin family had moved on from mushrooms;

Blondes all forgotten, of course, when the enchanting Angélique Leon at Savigny-en-Veron plied us with her lauded and prize-winning first vintage;

The erudite Charles Pain of Chinon ("wine and bread", Réal had jested, and obviously not for the first time);

And finally, after a long day of throwing away almost as much wine as we imbibed (dégustation), the extraordinarily-fine red produced at Cravant-Jes-Coteaux by a young man whose name was Jerome and whose fox-terrier was the image of Montmorency; we had truly come home. An extraordinary coincidence.

It is clear we had become increasingly relaxed about volumes of wine as the day had progressed. Harris, who after lunch had abandoned himself to his book, napping and a Test Match which suggested some restoration of national pride, was confident it would all fit in with our baggage, unconcerned at the time about how much would join him on the back seat.

But as the final day approached, even being swept up in a sunny local carnival at Parçay-les-Pins where our Jaguar windows became smeared by the noses of young and old alike pressed against the glass, chilling but not-quite sobering reality was settling upon us. Our hot water had also expired by then...

Could everything be shoe-horned into our stately vehicle and could we surmount the ferry ramp, the automatic self-levelling system keeping our underparts intact?

George had other reasons to be ill at ease that final night. Disturbed firstly by the noise in the room above him of Harris apparently sawing logs (snoring), he then

became convinced he was sharing his lodgings with wildlife of the non-cute and furry kind (it was rain falling down the chimney into the grate).

But it gave him the chance to ponder, plan and ultimately store every litre in the Jaguar with only a modicum of discomfort to Harris in the rear where he could watch dreadful French TV or read about some long-dead American President.

That evening as we cruised up the autoroute, all of France's pent-up summer rain descended upon us. But limpet-like traction, delivered effortlessly, brought us to the port in good time for George and Harris to devour vast cauldrons of mussels. Our embarkation was not marked by the sound of metal scraping on the loading bay deck but by respectful appreciation of our vehicle's dimensions and its aura of wealth.

Our good friend Vardy took back the ignition keys with the understanding smile of one who has seen others return to their humdrum lives where highly-automated luxury will play no further part. We had tasted the 'nectar' of the motoring gods. We had purchased as many litres of wine for bottling than our Jaguar had consumed in fuel and, when we come together to drink it in the months ahead, unquestionably there will be especial toasts to our mechanical host.

(1) *Three Men in a Boat* by Jerome K. Jerome has never been out of print since 1889. It's not a long book and a bargain buy would be the Penguin Classics version which also contains the sequel *Three Men on the Bummel* (Penguin Classics, £7.99).

(2) *Jerome's companions in the book were George and Harris and these names have been borrowed affectionately for this adventure.*

(3) *The Jaguar 4.2 supercharged; a classic shape with an extraordinary aluminium body which has every conceivable technological aid and safety feature. The engine and braking system are remarkable. When the acceleration was demonstrated to Réal, he said "It is like being in another dimension..."*

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(4) *Tired farmhouse unavailable: but for a wonderful gite for up to six people at Parçay-les-Pins just north-east of Saumur book Jo and Iain Buchanan's Le Friche. Visit www.french-holidaycottages.com but bear in mind the pictures on the website fail to do justice to this superb accommodation..*

(5) *Réal Fleury knows more Loire Valley vineyards, amazing cellars and friendly winegrowers than any other living person! He speaks English well (if not quite as expertly as his remarkable wife Gillette) and will organise tours of vineyards and accompany you. He can be contacted on 00332 43 45 09 14 or by e-mail on www.real.fleury@wanadoo.fr*



NE puzzles

SEX					LESSON
BLUE					BROTHER
BLACK					QUEEN
HARDY					LEAVE
FRENCH					BOX
LOG					BOY
SERIAL					WHALE
SET					MEAL
INDIAN					HOLIDAY
TOSS					CREAM
STAG					DRIVE
LUNATIC					SEEKER

WORD wise

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

LANGUOR

- A Listlessness
- B An authority on dialects
- C Colour-blind

ANSWER
A: Listlessness

CELEBRITY STARES



Name the star pictured on the left

ANSWERS
Celebrity wordmatch: The missing words are: object, blood, beauty, annual, window, cabin, killer, square, summer, salad, beetle, asylum and the celebrity is Joanna Lumley
Celebrity stare: Jonny Wilkinson

IMPOSSIBLE PUZZLE

"Here's a photo of four generations of my family taken last week at my great-grandmother's ninetieth birthday party," said Betty.
"That'll be your grandmother," said Mary, pointing to the photo. "How old is she?" Betty replied, "Her age, divided by my mother's, gives the same as my great-grandmother's age divided by my grandmother's. And my grandmother was the same age when my mother was born as my mother was when I was born."
How old is Betty?

SOLUTION
Betty is 20 years old.

NE competition

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At Joseph, mouth-watering designs become affordable must-haves – choose from a sensational range of co-ordinates, casual looks and stunning party dresses. Logo for Less, Designer Room and Suits. You offer top names at hugely reduced prices – so autumn can be just as good for the boys. And don't forget, bags are crucial – look for Italian beauty at Furia.

It's hard to beat Dalton Park for street cred style for guys as well as girls. Try Kurt Muller, Pilot, Probita and Mex – all specialise in the best looks at the best prices. Go for dressed down – if it's jeans and trousers – or "up-town" dresses, jackets and tops – at these prices you can go for both.

And with top brands Next and Marks & Spencer, you can't go wrong this season. Directional looks, sumptuous fabrics, great shapes and fabulous colours are all key to their autumn collections.

There's sportswear too – the fun kind as well as the serious stuff – from Adidas and Donnay – to some seriously sexy action gear from Surf, Skate & Snow (where you'll find some cool bargains from Billabong and Quiksilver. And with the cold weather coming on – don't grapple with the

elements without a trip to Tog 24 or Mountain Warehouse, where you can stock up on performance clothing. And with all the money you can save at Dalton Park – you'll be able to splash out on some luxurious lingerie, fabulous accessories, great bags, fabulous jewellery and sensationally stylish shoes for men and women – try Camille Lingerie, Chapelle Jewellery, Claire's Accessories, Soled Out, Charles Clinkard, Lilley & Skinner and Bags.

Dalton Park is offering NE readers the chance to win £250 of vouchers to spend at Joseph. To enter the competition, simply name three of the clothing brands available at Dalton Park. Send your answer, along with your name, address and daytime telephone number to Dalton Park Competition, NE Magazine, c/o Features, The Northern Echo, Priestgate, Darlington, DL1 1NF. The closing date is the end of November.



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