

The Northern Echo

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The lifestyle magazine
for the North-East

JULY 2006

MY STYLE

The Postcode
Lottery
presenter

MOTORING

Bentley
does it

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GRIFFITHS

The perils of
garden parties



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sharon griffiths

“How do you get into a hammock when you’re carrying a glass of wine and a plate of nibbles?”

FUNNY the things that save you from seduction... Many years ago I was at a wonderful garden party given by theatrical folk, parents of a university friend. The sun shone, the air was heavy with the scent of flowers, delicious food and the gushes of “Da-a-rling!” from all the actors present.

I wore a straw hat, bare feet and a long Laura Ashley dress with little pink flowers all over it. My hair was so long it came down to my waist.

With a glass of wine in one hand and a little plate of nibbly things in the other, I wandered through the garden looking for my friend’s good-looking brother and trying to spot any famous faces, most of whom looked alarmingly old compared to their stage or screen appearances.

At the far end of the garden, between two plum trees, was a huge hammock. In it lounged an actor, moderately famous, the sort who always played the famous detective’s right hand man or the hero’s best friend, those sort of roles. He was wearing a cream linen suit and a panama hat – incredibly stylish for the time.

He watched me coming down the path and then leered at me invitingly.

“Come and join me,” he said.

And Reader, I was torn. Part of me thought he was a dirty old man (he must have been, ooh, all of 40), but, well, he was an actor and he was fairly famous. I hesitated.

The actor leered again. “Come on. Hop in.”

And that’s when I had to refuse.

I mean, how do you get into a hammock when you’re wearing an ankle length dress and carrying a glass of wine and a plate of nibbles?

I declined his invitation and scuttled back out of his reach. My university friend was not so lucky and got cornered by him among the raspberry canes. He was, she told me, disgusting...

Courses for would-be young ladies always used to include a bit of deportment, how to get in and out of sports cars without showing your knickers, that sort of thing. I don’t think they ever included how to get into, or out of, a hammock. Shame. They should have.

The hammock – very difficult to get in and out of at all, let alone with any dignity or decorum – is only one of the perils of the summer’s outdoor life. And at least it looks tricky so you’re warned.

Not so with those metal and plastic chairs.

Fine for the patio, but if you put them on the grass, you will soon find yourself gradually sinking.

Those heavy iron ones are always terribly uncomfortable, and they leave patterns on your bum and the back of your legs. Very elegant.

Deckchairs are, of course, notoriously unreliable, liable to collapse under the slightest provocation, leaving you flat on the back with your feet waving in the air and utterly mortified.

Or if the framework doesn’t collapse, then the fabric, after a winter in the damp of the garage or shed, frays and comes apart, leaving you trapped in the middle of it, stuck, unable to move. Let’s see Eggleston Hall’s finishing school trying to tell you how to get out of that like a lady.

And then there’s that old favourite of the table with the fixed benches either side, much loved by pub gardens. There are people who can sit down at these simply, easily elegantly without kicking the person next to them... then there are the rest of us.

There are heavy fixed benches, not liable to collapse, but also unable to be moved, so you’re either staring, blinded, into the sun, getting a red nose, or left in the chill shade.

And those large swinging seats which make me (a) seasick and (b) slosh wine all down my front.

A friend of mine has never drunk Campari since the day one of those giant Campari sunshades that fit through a hole in the table collapsed on him as he sat outside a fashionable pub. It wasn’t the pain as he and his bottle of wine were trapped inside its folds, but his yelps of shock and the subsequent embarrassment that scarred him for life.

And if you just sit on the lawn you get grass stains and cramp and probably rheumatism in your bum as well. And the dog eats your picnic.

Then there are insects that creep, crawl, buzz, bite or sting, flies in your beer, wasps in your wine, not to mention the threat of hayfever, sunburn, a chill and rogue flames and splashes of fat from the barbecue.

All in all, lovely though summer may be, wonderful though it is to have the warmth and the sun, sometimes it’s easier to stay indoors, especially if you want to eat or drink. Or just sit down in comfort.

Stay on the sofa. You know it makes sense.

TENTS MOMENTS

IF your little ones fancy an afternoon under canvas, the Little Present Company has some unusual playtents, bunkbed dens, and this brightly-coloured wigwam, which costs £135.95. The company, based in North Cowton, also has hammocks, christening gifts, clothes, toys and children’s furniture.

The Little Present Company, Roselea, Silver Hill, North Cowton, Northallerton, DL7 0EX. Tel: (01325) 378066.

www.littlepresentcompany.co.uk



CUTTING EDGE CANVAS

DESIGNER label Ted Baker has joined forces with outdoor experts Blacks to create an exclusive range of fund, quirky and highly technical tents and camping equipment. The eccentric range takes its inspiration from all things quintessentially British, including a formation of flying ducks mounted on delicate rose design wallpaper, a stag’s head set against a 1970s retro bamboo print and a British river fish print. The tents come in a range of

sizes and cost from £89.99. The fish sleeping bag below costs £49.99.

www.blacks.co.uk

Milletts have also taken a well-known designer on board to design their tent fabrics. British lifestyle designer Cath Kidston’s vintage collection includes a printed cowboy teepee (£99.99) and sleeping bag (£29.99), and a floral and a stripes range. The Eurohike cowboy ridge tent pictured left costs £69.99.

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Patio power

If your outdoor room needs a spring clean before it's fit to welcome barbecue guests this summer, PATRICIA ALLEN has some tips on how to pamper your patio

If anyone uttering the phrase "outdoor room" instantly throws you into a panic at this time of year, join the club. This probably means that your patio resembles mine – and rather than an idyllic garden retreat looks instead as though it's suffering a winter hangover.

Frankly, a remedy is essential if your setting features discoloured plastic furniture, a limp umbrella and cracked pots.

Luckily you don't need green fingers to transform it. All that's required is a battle plan, a small budget and some time to carry out a summer facelift.

Give the whole area a satisfying clean up with a pressure water hose, and dump that tired furniture.

If you're splashing out on a new table and chairs, it's probably worth spending a little more so that they're weatherproof or opt for fold-up varieties that can easily be bunged in the shed or under the stairs.

Just like dressing an indoor room, it's the finishing touches that make a huge difference. Lighting is key, even if it's only candles in jam jars, and you can add instant colour and interest with pretty pots or containers.

There's no need to despair if the rest of your patch is a drought-battered colourless dessert. Simply scatter floral cushions on chairs, put up a vibrant parasol, and lay out floral picnicware and it could look blooming marvellous.

Pamper your patio and you'll find everyone will head out there at every opportunity no matter what the weather.

TOP-TO-TOE PATIO FACELIFT FLOORS

If you're going for a complete overhaul, decking's still popular but paving slabs are more practical and chic.

Patio flooring which complements the home's exterior colour and style is key to its

success. Get a sample and live with it for a few days before making a decision.

B&Q has a selection of Weatherdale paving slabs in a variety of effects from Cotswold and York to weathered Limestone, which start at around £278 for a 50-slab pack. Wickes' equally well-priced collection includes Natural Riven Sandstone paving, from £23.82 per square metre, and Buxton Paving and Walling £11.22 per square metre. Or simply scatter pebbles...

FURNITURE

Al fresco fiends who love entertaining might think it's worth investing in hard-wearing weather-proof tables, particularly those in



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WHATEVER THE WEATHER: hardwood Windsor patio set £99 and Chimenea outdoor heater £45. All from TJ Hughes. www.tjhughes.co.uk. Stockists: 0151-207 2600

sleek, contemporary steel. Alternatively, you could opt to use fold-up tables and chairs that can be easily stored in winter.

Transport yourself to warmer climes with the brilliantly coloured Raffia parasol from John Lewis, or the Nimbus range of furniture in seaside fresh turquoise and white.

Argos, too, is gaining a well-earned reputation for its formula of high style and low price. Its white painted wooden New England set costs £349.49 for four chairs and a table, or try the sleek, modern Rhodes collection in aluminium and black glass. Table, eight chairs and parasol, £599.99.

LOUNGING

Occasional seats or hammocks are often forgotten as many people prefer patio sets, but they're less dominating and ideal if you just want to chill on the patio rather than strut your stuff at the barbie. Rock on with a rocking deck chair, £95, or lounge on a Steamer seat, £395. Both from the New heights Champion range of teak garden furniture.

John Lewis has hammocks and waterproof beanbags and Woolworths has pint-size fold-

ing armchairs for the kids at £4.99 each, and Bug tables or benches decorated with bees, snails and butterflies for £6.99 and £7.99.

FINISHING TOUCHES

You can banish the chill on the patio with a Chimenea, an outdoor heater or brazier, and add atmosphere with a selection of lanterns. Group pots together for colour and interest and intersperse tea lights for an evening focal point. Add a fashionable Eastern touch with large Resin Buddha Head, £9.99 from Sainsbury's, or use its terracotta planters starting from £2.99 and ribbed zinc planters from £6.99.



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: New England white painted wooden garden furniture: four chairs and a table, £349.49 from Argos; Stockists: 0870-600 8784 www.argos.co.uk; the Nimbus range of furniture from John Lewis; the Rhodes collection in aluminium and black glass. Table, eight chairs and parasol, £599.99. from Argos. Stockists: 0870-600 8784 www.argos.co.uk



- **Argos:** 0870 600 8784/www.argos.co.uk
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ABOVE: Outdoor beanbags £99 each and outdoor mattress cushions £30 Stax cushions £50; Luna lanterns £7; Bubble tea light holders (set of three) £7; Turquoise glass vases £15, £20. All from John Lewis. (08456) 049 049 www.johnlewis.com

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NE interiors

The current owners loved Staindrop House so much they bought it twice. So it's with great regret that they find themselves packing up to leave once again, they tell IAN LAMMING

HISTORY FOR SALE:
Staindrop House,
below, and below, Jean
and Harry Walton



Hide-and-seek heaven



OPENING the door into what, at my count, is the fifth reception room of her home, Jean Walton announces: "This lounge is known as the clock room because you can see the church clock from the window. We have to give the rooms names because if someone says they're going to sit in the lounge we have to ask, which one?"

With at least two more reception rooms in the floor above us to add to the list it's a sen-

sible system that doesn't just apply to sitting and dining rooms.

Two of the four staircases also have names – the 'blue' staircase after its carpet and the 'castle' staircase after its trompe l'oeil mock stone paintwork. And that doesn't include the half staircases and extra steps dotted all over.

There are big family houses. Then there is Staindrop House, a rambling, up and down, in and out, hide-and-seek heaven of a home in the County Durham village.

You get an idea of its scale by the 16 windows across its cream-painted frontage, each bordered in original stone.

It is believed that the grade two listed house dates back to the late 17th century. While its original owner remains unclear, at some point in its history it was bought by the Vane family, owners of nearby Raby Castle since the 1600s.

It became a Dower House, providing a home for lady dowagers or other relatives or agents of the Raby estate. The current Lord Barnard's grandmother is believed to have lived there.

Staindrop House was also home to Mr Scarth, clearly an important resident since he gave his name to the village hall, and later to Mr Fife, an estate agent, according to Jean's husband Harry who has always lived in the area.

The Waltons first bought the house in 1967 and raised their two boys there before moving on. They returned 12 years ago.

Jean explains: "After being used to such a big home we kept building on here and building on there to the new house. I decided I wanted a bigger bathroom and when we got the cost I said 'I'd rather buy Staindrop House back'. So we did."

In the intervening years it had been turned into a nursing home for ten residents, an odd choice considering the accessibility problems of a 350-year-old house with four staircases.



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“By the time we came back it was quite desolate, the garden completely overgrown. We spent a lot bringing it up to modern standards but it’s an old house so there’s always something to do and as we get a bit long in the tooth it’s becoming harder,” says Jean.

So it is with regret that, once again, they are leaving Staindrop House.

This time, though, they’re saying goodbye to more than a family home, they’re also leaving a business.

► Continued on page 8



We do use the whole house. I’m always up and down looking for something and we can even fill it when the family come to stay. The grandchildren love it

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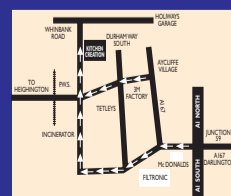


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VIEW FROM THE GROUNDS: pendulous wisteria frames the windows; below, the stable door to the garden and a floral theme in one of the bathrooms

► Continued from page 7

A few years ago the Waltons converted an old stable block into two holiday cottages, one with room for five people, the other for two. For sale fully furnished with the main house and with bookings through to October, they offer a ready-made income for the new owner.

The cottages face onto a paved courtyard which also runs the length of the back of the main house and leads into the established walled garden.

Around the wide lawns shaded with willow and silver birch are quiet sitting areas, a vegetable patch, various huts and sheds, an ornamental pond and an outdoor cooking shelter with barbecue.

The view through the apple and cherry blossom back to the house with its grand Georgian windows fringed with wisteria is lovely.

There are three ways back inside so Jean leads the way, first to the cellars which have original flagged floors and steps worn down by many a wine hunter.

Off the main hallway, which has a highly sought-after Victorian mosaic floor, is a door leading to a granny flat created for Jean's mum with open plan kitchen and living space and, across the corridor, a bedroom with shower. A legacy of the nursing home days, virtually every room in the house still has plumbing.

Passing a dining room at the front of the house, the 22ft by 17ft main kitchen (there are more of those too) leads into another bedroom with en suite and a conservatory.

The Waltons have opted for the most practical use of the space to suit their needs, fol-



lowing a long tradition of rooms undergoing many guises over the years.

Something Staindrop House does have in spades is practicality, with traditional labels for rooms seemingly not necessary. Referring to their bedroom, which at times has been a coal house and a dining room, Jean says: "It's whatever you want to make of it."

One room, though, that could really have only one use is the grand main living room with corniced ceiling, picture and dado rails, large fireplace and views across the garden.

Moving through we reach the aforementioned blue staircase going up halfway to a mezzanine level where there's the 'garden lobby' and charming garden room with floor



to ceiling windows and double French windows for maximum views.

On the first floor proper there's another full-size kitchen, two more bedrooms and a bathroom. The second floor has potentially four more double bedrooms, though one is Jean's sewing room and another is a lounge-kitchen. It might be a huge house but you don't have to go far to find a loo or make a sandwich.

With proportions to match the main living room below there's another enormous room overlooking the garden which, with its en suite, makes a fabulous master suite.

While it has very much manor house proportions, Staindrop House is in the heart of the village and activity is visible from those many windows. It's a few yards down Front Street from the parish church and across the

road from the Methodist chapel so, while it's big, it doesn't feel cut off or unliveable.

With just Harry, Jean and her mum living here now you could forgive them for confining themselves to the ground level and rarely making it up to the rooms at the top, but that's not the case.

"It's a friendly house. I wouldn't like it if there were rooms we never went in," says Jean. "We do use the whole house. I'm always up and down looking for something and we can even fill it when the family come to stay. The grandchildren love it, it will be a big miss for them."

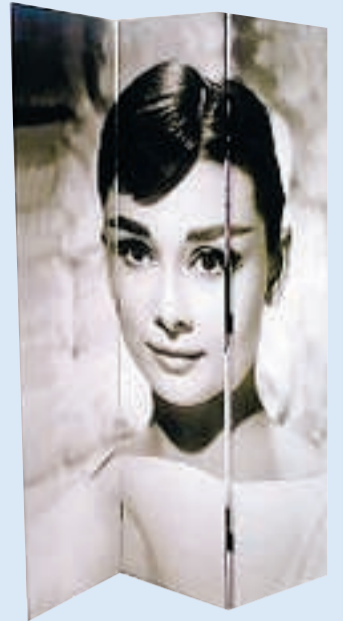
As Jean's two dogs race each other across the garden for the hundredth time that afternoon, you get the feeling this grand old lady of a house will miss the family that fills her rooms too.



There are three ways back inside, so Jean leads the way, first down to the cellars which have original flagged floors

■ Staindrop House is for sale with Fine & Country at Robinsons estate agents, Duke Street, Darlington, tel: (01325) 484440

Pictures: ANDY LAMB



NE window shopping

AMONG the exclusive designer brands at Triads in Linthorpe Road, Middlesbrough – one of the North-East's leading designer stores – are new ranges from Fornarina, Fake London, Evisu and Vivienne Westwood. Fornarina's range starts from around £40 for a selection of halter-neck tops and blouses. The exclusive Fornarina Vibe range includes a limited edition collection of T-shirts and dresses designed by the internationally renowned artist, Miss Van, and there's the chance to get your hands on a pair of Evisu's new loose-fitting jeans – as seen on Beyonce Knowles – with prices starting from £156.99. Triads is also stocking shoes and accessories by Vivienne Westwood. To complement the extensive range of casual wear which Triads has become well respected for throughout the North, the store has added a variety of more formal wear by prestigious designers to its collections.

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SCREEN TEST

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NE gardening



Titchmarsh's tips for a family friendly garden

As families everywhere rush into the great outdoors, the nation's favourite gardener explains how to make your plot a favourite place for children as well as grown-ups. HANNAH STEPHENSON reports

The gardening guru Alan Titchmarsh is no stranger to designing family-friendly gardens. After all, he has a grown-up family of his own. "Your garden is not only a lovely place to enjoy the summer months, you can also have great fun as a family just creating it," says Titchmarsh.

Here are Titchmarsh's top tips to help your family get the best out of the garden:

- Sit down and discuss what everyone wants to get out of the garden. The whole family should have a say and everyone should be able to have at least one thing in the garden that gives them real enjoyment.

If there are children involved, what would make them really benefit from the garden – a hard area for ballgames, their own vegetable and flower patch or a sand pit? The more generous you are with space for children in the garden, the greater the chance that they will grow up loving it.

- Look at the conditions in the garden and choose plants that suit it. Consider soil type, light and moisture retention. Don't waste money on plants that won't grow well in the environment you have.

- When choosing plants for a family friendly garden avoid prickly varieties such as holly or berberis. Try getting the kids involved, but keep things simple and rely on the children's natural inquisitive nature.

They are likely to be keen to get their hands dirty, so give them the opportunity to plant their own seeds.

Choose the best spot in the garden to give them the best chance of success so they are

not easily discouraged. Choose large seeds like nasturtiums which can be pushed into the soil with a tiny finger.

The rate of seed growth can be a slow process so while plants are coming up from seed, get the kids planting flowering plants such as pansies and busy lizzies, geraniums (pelargoniums) and French marigolds. Or try lettuce on a vegetable patch, which comes up fast and quickly demonstrates the pleasure of sowing and eating.

- Choose plants that have a long season. Penstemons are more elegant versions of the foxglove and flower from late June through to November and they cut well so that you can enjoy the flowers indoors. White, pink, red and purple-blue varieties are available.

Osteospermum are also richly rewarding and can flower right into autumn in a variety of colours including peach, orange and yellow. Plant them in a sunny spot in well-drained soil for best results.

For a splash of colour go for simple summer bedding plants which you can buy from your local garden centre. Petunias and busy lizzies (impatiens) are ideal choices, and busy lizzies enjoy a modicum of shade.

Your garden is not only a lovely place to enjoy the summer months, you can also have great fun as a family creating it

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- 2** Use tuberous plants for their exciting sizzling colours, such as *Sparaxis tricolor*, with grass-like leaves and bright orange, red or purple flowers. Other good options include *Crococsmia 'Lucifer'*, its vibrant red flowers and lance-like leaves providing good architectural value as well as colour.
- 3** If you have a shady spot, add a leafy canopy such as a magnolia, under which you could plant lush ferns with dark green fronds, or lilies which enjoy light shade such as *Lilium 'Citronella'*.

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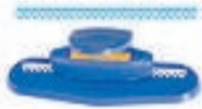
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FROM LEFT: Renee Zellweger; Beatrix Potter and Hill top cottage



A new film about one of the Lake District's most famous residents will probably send more sightseers than ever to one of our best-loved holiday destinations

Time to **Potter?**

THE stunning landscape of the Lake District has long played a leading role in the lives of walkers and tourists. Now it's set to play a leading role in Hollywood too, as a star-studded biopic of the life of Beatrix Potter is brought to the big screen.

The film will star Hollywood actress Renee Zellweger as the famous children's writer, farmer, feminist and conservationist whose presence continues to be felt strongly in her adopted home. With filming in the Lakes just completed and the hotly-anticipated picture set for release next year, we take a look at some of the Beatrix Potter attractions you can enjoy in Cumbria.

WHAT TO SEE

Hill Top, Near Sawrey, Ambleside, Cumbria
In 1905, Beatrix bought Hill Top, a little farm in Sawrey. Beatrix took a very active part in caring for her Lake District farms. Dressed in her clogs, shawl and old tweed skirt, she helped with the hay making, waded through mud to unblock drains and searched the fells for lost sheep. She said she was at her happiest when she was with her farm animals. Today the house is in the care of the National Trust and open to the public. The furnishings, library and pretty garden are as she left them - it was a condition of her will.
www.nationaltrust.org.uk

Tower Bank Arms
This pub is next door to Hill Top and can be seen in one of the sketches for The Tale of Jemima Puddleduck.
www.towerbankarms.co.uk

The World of Beatrix Potter, Bowness-on-Windermere
A recent £2m renovation has brought the colourful characters of Peter Rabbit and co dramatically to life. All 23 tales are told in 3D so you can meet Cecily Parsley, Jemima Puddleduck and friends.
www.hop-skip-jump.com

The Beatrix Potter Gallery, Hawkshead
The award-winning Beatrix Potter Gallery houses an annually changing exhibition of her delicate watercolours in the restored premises of her husband William Heelis's offices in the main street.
www.beatrixpottergallery@ntrust.org.uk

Windermere Steamboat Museum
Beatrix Potter spent many happy days rowing on Moss Eccles Tarn whilst she lived at Sawrey. It is thought that the water lilies on Moss Eccles inspired the story of Jeremy Fisher.
www.steamboat.co.uk

The Armit Museum and Library, Ambleside
The library contains a large collection of Beatrix Potter's fungi, natural history and archaeological watercolours and drawings and there is a display on her life in the museum. www.armitt.plus.com

Holehird
Beatrix Potter stayed at a number of different houses with her family before moving up to the area to live. She stayed twice at Holehird. The gardens were voted one of the nation's favourite gardens by viewers of Gardeners' World in 2002. Entry to the gardens is free.

Windermere Lake Cruises
A trip on the lake is one of the best ways to enjoy the landscape that inspired Beatrix Potter. If you take one of the boats from Bowness to Ambleside you will also pass Wray Castle, which was the first Beatrix Potter stayed in with her family on their first trip to the Lakes in 1882.
www.windermere-lakecruises.co.uk

Derwentwater
From 1885 to 1903 the Potter's stayed at houses on the shores of Derwentwater. The area is the setting of a number of her books and a number of well known



views can be seen in her sketches. Squirrel Nutkin is shown paddling across the lake towards St Herbert's Island. Mrs Tiggy-Winkle can be seen in front of one of the Lake District's highest mountains, Skiddaw.

Esthwaite Water

Now a major trout farm with views of the Lake District hills, visitors can fish from the bank or boat for trout. Esthwaite, a near but lesser-known neighbour of Windermere, was the setting for the Tale of Jeremy Fisher, the lily-pod jumping frog.

Lakeland Sheep and Wool Centre

With her shepherd, Tom Storey, Potter bred Herdwick sheep – a rare and threatened breed indigenous to the Lake District. In 1943, Beatrix became the first woman to be elected President of the Herdwick Sheep Breeders' Association. More can be found out about Herdwick Sheep at the Lakeland Sheep and Wool Centre in Cockermouth.

www.sheep-woolcentre.co.uk

Lakeland Sports and Shows

Beatrix Potter's interest in Herdwick sheep meant she also developed an enthusiasm for the Lakeland shows where the sheep and other agricultural produce were displayed. Many of the shows also have sporting competitions including Cumberland & Westmorland Wrestling and fell running. In 1930, she wrote: "We had our pretty little Baa's at Ennerdale Show last week and yesterday at Keswick... The sheep have been very successful in the female classes; sixteen first prizes, and several shows to come."

For details of sports and shows see www.gocumbria.org

WHERE TO STAY

Yew Tree Farm, Coniston

Yew Tree Farm was saved from the threat of developers when Beatrix Potter purchased it in 1930 as part of the large Monk Coniston Estate. In harsh economic times Beatrix Potter encouraged her tenants to welcome visitors and at her own expense helped them to set up a small tea room in the dining room of the house, furnishing it with antique furniture she bought locally. Today, visitors can stay in the cosy B&B at the farm or rent a cottage on the estate and the tea room was recently reopened – complete with the same furniture.

www.yewtree-farm.com

Lindeth Howe Hotel, Windermere

Beatrix Potter fell in love with Lindeth Howe when she and her family rented it as a holiday home. Many years



ALL ABOUT BEATRIX...

- After her death, she donated 14 farms, 4,000 acres of land and her sheep to the National Trust.
- She is quoted as saying, "Thank goodness I was never sent to school; it would have rubbed off some of the originality."
- In 2001, it was discovered that Potter may have taken the characters names from people buried in a cemetery in London. Names on headstones included Mr Nutkin, Mr McGregor, Jeremiah Fisher, Tommy Brock – and even a Peter Rabbett.
- At first, no publisher wanted to publish Peter Rabbit. Beatrix Potter took her own savings and paid for the first printing.
- Beatrix had a real pet rabbit called Peter that she liked to put on a leash and walk through London.

later, when she was living at Sawrey, Beatrix noticed that the property was for sale and it was bought as a home for her mother. Today Lindeth Howe is a lovely hotel complete with pool and restaurant.

www.lindeth-howe.co.uk

Nurses' Cottage, Hawkshead

The cottage is the Lakeland home of a nurse employed by Beatrix Potter to care for her mother. The cottage is five minutes stroll from Hawkshead Village, Grizedale Forest is nearby. Heart of the Lakes, 015394 32321. Sleeps four in two bedrooms.

www.heartofthelakes.co.uk

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me and my wardrobe



Since the age of 18, Ingrid Hagemann has been both a radio presenter in the North-East, Chicago, Miami and London for Capital FM, and a mix DJ across the US and the UK. Image has always been an important part of her busy lifestyle – and a huge interest for her too. Now back home in the region as the first official ambassador for the Postcode Lottery, she hands over cheques for £25,000 to local winners, cash prizes to their neighbours and also presents money to regional charities. To date, she has given more than £1m away to winners and charities combined.



ABOVE: Levi shirt, skirt from Ralph Lauren, boots from Western World, USA.
LEFT: jeans from Gap, top from New Look

Describe your look

I suppose it changes from day to day, but I'd have to say in the main it is smart/casual, which is a description you hate to find on invitations because it is open to interpretation. I love to mix and match stuff for individuality. I'm not over-girlie, but I love pretty things and my favourite colours are pink and beige.

What is your favourite item of clothing?

To my mother's disgust, I have many, many pairs of jeans. I've just culled down my collection down to 12 pairs – mostly from Gap as they make them long and lean and fit me well. My latest pair was bought over the Internet from D-Squared2, which you can't get here in the UK and that's probably why I like them so much.

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

This is a hard one to answer without sounding like a clone who just throws money at clothes – which I'm not. I love bargains, adding great cheap buys to one investment piece often gives you the best individual look, rather than a top to toe designer wash. That said, I am guilty of buying a £3,500 made-to-measure evening dress.

What's been your worst buy? Shoes that I never wear. I've had many disasters in the footwear department that range from a

pair of thigh-high gold boots which have never been outside, to more than a few "just for the car" heels, of which I have many. So now when I buy a shoe that's comfy I grab it in a few colours, which is easy when New Look have so many great ones at just £20.

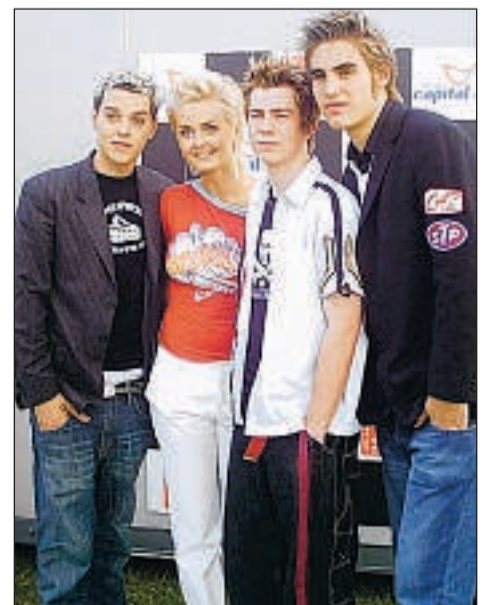
What are your favourite shops?

Most of the high street ones to be honest. Primark, Debenhams in the Bridges, in Sunderland; New Look, M&S Exclusive label, H&M... I'm not a slave to labels unless I want to invest in something classic that will last and last. Most of my statement pieces I buy from abroad online – especially funky jewellery, so you won't find them over here.

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

Well, you're supposed to have fun with fashion, so singer Gwen Stefani for her individuality, poise and glamour – not to mention her own great clothing line, Lamb. I also like actress Brittany Murphy who's eclectic in a fresh, "just threw it together" classy vibe. If you mixed these two stars together you'd probably get fashion icon Debbie Harry, which can't be bad.

LEFT: trousers from Whistles, top from Marc Jacobs, shoes from Oasis. Right: in her role as Postcode Lottery ambassador with happy winners and at a promotion with Busted



NE out on the town

Sixth form students from Northallerton College marked the end of school life with a ball at Tall Trees near Yarm. We asked them for some style tips...

James Bindoff, 18, of East Cowton

Where did you get your outfit? Pinstripe suit and pink shirt from River Island, tie from Binns, Darlington, sunglasses from Woolworths
Where do you shop? Top Man, Burtons, River Island and Tesco
Favourite fashion era? The 70s, because I like the Rolling Stones
Favourite celebrity dresser? Richard Fleeshman, who plays Craig in Coronation Street
Beauty tip? Get a fake tan before going to a party and wear your hair any way that works.



JAMES BINDOFF



JODIE LINGUARD

Jodie Linguard, 18, of Crakehall
Where did you get your outfit? The dress is from Warehouse, the bag from Topshop
Where do you shop? Warehouse and Topshop.
Favourite fashion era? Current fashion.
Favourite celebrity dresser? Kate Moss
Beauty tip? Hair straighteners, I wouldn't be without mine.



FRANCES ALLAN

Frances Allan, 18, of Northallerton
Where did you get your outfit? The dress is from Next and the shoes are Clarks.
Where do you shop? Dorothy Perkins in Northallerton and Primark in Darlington and Middlesbrough
Favourite fashion era? I like to take bits from different eras and put them together.
Favourite celebrity dresser? Cheryl Crow
Beauty tip? My great grandma told me to stay natural. She was 108 when she died.

School's out!

Kirsty Thompson, 18, of Scruton, near Bedale

Where did you get your outfit? Dress from All Saints in Leeds, jewellery from Mikey, bag from my hairdressers Scyzory in Northallerton and shoes from Topshop
Where do you shop? Topshop in Middlesbrough and All Saints in Leeds
Favourite fashion era? Whatever is in the shops now.
Favourite celebrity dresser? Paris Hilton
Beauty tip? Exfoliate before



KIRSTY THOMPSON



HEATHER SMALES

Heather Smales, 17, of Northallerton

Where did you get your outfit? It was in a German advert on ebay and cost £29. My mum had to alter it for me when it arrived. My necklace is my mum's, the handbag is from Internationale and shoes from New Look.
Where do you shop? Miss Selfridge, New Look and Primark for accessories
Favourite fashion era? Now, definitely. It's just getting better and better. I like things that show off your figure.
Favourite celebrity dresser? Jennifer Lopez for her perfect make-up, Beyonce Knowles for her beautiful hair

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PEOPLE'S perceptions of kitchens and bathrooms are changing: kitchens are becoming the hub of the family home, with both eating and preparation areas sharing the same space, while bathrooms are seen as a place to relax and unwind.

A desire to meet this shift in lifestyle is behind changes at Fired Earth in Northallerton. The store, which has been based in the North Yorkshire market town for 14 years, is developing and expanding its showrooms both on the ground and first floors to incorporate a large bathroom collection and a new kitchen display, featuring the recently launched Shaker free-standing range.

The beautiful, hand-crafted kitchens help to create a more flexible, work-friendly space. Matching tables, chairs, sink units, butchers' blocks, dressers and island units, crafted in cherry and beech, are available in eight colours from the Fired Earth paint range.

The ground floor showroom will feature the new kitchens, with Aga cookers alongside the stunning range of tiles, wooden and natural floorings, fabrics, rugs and the well-known range of paints.

When it comes to bathrooms, today's bathroom is as much about relaxation and feeling good as it is about more practical matters and Fired Earth aims to reflect that. "The first floor of the Northallerton showroom is being completely renovated to incorporate several new areas showing everything we do from baths, showers, wet rooms, basins, taps and sculptured natural stone or marble bowls to built-in showers and accessories," says David Tailford, owner of the Northallerton showroom. "The choices range from contemporary to classic with a gallery of fittings to create a completely unique look. People nowadays are looking for something more individual."

David and his wife Sue were the first UK licensees for a Fired Earth store and they are proud that Northallerton has been run as a family business, employing seven local people.

"Originally, we were going to move, but this is such a good spot and we have plenty of space and lots of free parking in town, so we decided to stay and swap things round a bit," says Sue. "Developing the showroom has been a result

of an increased interest in the free-standing kitchens and an expansion of the bathroom ranges," adds David. "The market is moving towards free-standing items and this is an area in which we specialise."

Traditionally, the Fired Earth brand has probably been best known for its fantastic range of tiles – around 650 at last count – and for its range of 120 paint colours.

"The majority of tiles are hand made and produced exclusively for Fired Earth, enabling us to offer customers a truly original product. They're beautiful and tactile and we pride ourselves on our worldwide sources," says Sue.

Fired Earth has also introduced a new solid oak range of flooring, fashioned from European oak and forested from sustainable sources. Each board is available in five different shades, either as a solid wood or engineered board, both pre-sanded and pre-oiled for easy installation.

With such a huge range of fantastic items for the home on offer, one of the main problems facing customers will be making their minds up, but Fired Earth employees are trained to take people right through the design process, from seeking advice on colour, style and suitability to installation.

And while North Yorkshire is very much the main catchment area, Sue says people are willing to travel some distance to Northallerton as there is lots of free parking and a pleasant environment. "We also stock the entire Fired Earth range, whereas other stores do not have the space to do this."

■ **Special opening events will include Aga cookery demonstrations, incentive offers and promotional events**

■ **The Fired Earth sale is on now and will run until August 13, with up to 50 per cent off selected items.**



Developing the showroom has been a result of an increased interest in the free-standing kitchens

Great bowls of fire

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WHEN it comes to blazing a trail, CVO Fire is way out in front. Not only is it well known for its breathtaking designs, but the company is constantly innovating to bring the living flame experience to more and more homes. One of its latest products has just clinched a top award for a new breed of flueless fire which can be used in homes without a chimney.

Now the company is forging ahead with new trends for fire design – ideas which mix the traditional and contemporary to great effect – and it is all being made easier with the opening of a northern showroom at their head office location.

CVO Fire, with its husband and wife design team, are regarded in the industry as leaders and innovators. Their designs are often imitated but the couple take it all in good part. “If imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, we must be doing something right,” says Carolyn Van Outersterp. “So many people seem to want to copy us.”

CVO, launched by Carolyn and her husband Christian in 1999, designs and makes gas fireplaces, priding itself on innovative styles and technology. They have a hip flagship showroom/restaurant in London to meet the needs of their Southern customers, but recently noticed increasing demand for their products in the North, hence the opening of the new showroom in Newton Aycliffe.

The company currently has the biggest selection of CE-approved gas fires in Europe, all hand-built to order. They include modern flat screen, firebowls and the flueless and classic mantel designs. The look is sleek and cool. Under-stated, yet impressive.

CVO are regarded as the Prada or Armani of the fireplace industry. Not only do they have award winning designs but the quality is second to none. They use only the best and most luxu-



rious materials, with hand-cast designs that are hand-polished for days. The fireplace is often the focal point of a living space and many of the CVO designs are sculptures in their own right.

As well as being suitable for all types of home, the flueless Fire Line range also produces heat with very low emissions. In fact, they burn so cleanly that no catalytic converter is needed. Homes and Gardens magazine recently picked the design out for one of its awards, pointing out that the fires feature living flame without wasting precious resources. The range will also have bespoke, hand-painted fascias.

CVO have also won the coveted Prince of Wales gold medal for contemporary product design, along with numerous industry accolades for pioneering gas technology.

Carolyn has her finger firmly on the pulse of style trends. CVO has created classic pieces with contemporary burners and features more hand detail, hand-painting and bejewelled decoration with crystals.

“The decorative element is creeping in,” she says. “And it is not a backwards move, but a sideways one. Design is back and it is more eclectic. At the top end of the market people are trying to differentiate themselves, mixing antique and contemporary. It is very much mix and match just now.”



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gadget man

Turning on to high definition TV

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

Thirty years ago British television viewers had three channels to choose from. Now there are more than 500 and the way we watch TV is entering a new era. NIGEL BURTON reports



BEST FOR THE LIVING ROOM
Panasonic TH-37PX60. Price: £1,850

NOW the neck end of two grand is still an awful lot of cash to spend on your telly but just think how much time you spend in front of the old goggle box. Shop around online and you should score yourself a hefty discount off this top Panasonic set.

The Japanese giant has really cracked flat panel displays and this plasma set gives wonderful pictures full of depth and detail. Sadly, there's only one HD socket round the back so that Blu Ray HD recorder will have to be daisy chained to the Sky box.

If you don't want a 32-inch set, take a look at the Panasonic LCD range too because they offer equally enticing pictures.

If you bought a television in the last couple of years the chances are you'll be pretty happy with the picture. Advances in cathode ray tube (CRT) technology may have been a long time coming but when the manufacturers got their act together, we received a host of goodies all at once. There was 100Hz scanning, pixel interpolation, and PAL progressive scan to name but three.

And today all of them are as up-to-the-minute as a Penny Farthing is to a Honda Fireblade superbike. The reason for this? High definition television.

Digital transmission has finally come of age and the next telly you buy will almost certainly give you a picture unlike any other.

The shops are now filling up nicely with flat panel TVs bearing the all-important HD Ready logo and the signs are that we can't get enough of them. Sales in John Lewis are up 118 per cent compared to the same period last year. No wonder Currys can't wait to shift the last CRT sets from its shelves.

The HD Ready designation means your purchase will have the necessary resolution and connections to display High Def images.

But what to buy? Well take a look at these beauties...

BEST FOR THE WELL OFF
Loewe Individual. Cost: £2,300

THIS posh German make styles its sets to look uber-cool and the technology behind them is just as good.

Loewe's Individual TV can be accessorised to match your home. The casing and side panels can all be swapped for different coloured items.

Interesting options include a built-in hard disk that can record from the digital tuner rather like Sky+.



BEST FOR THE HARD UP

Your current CRT set. Don't buy an LCD set unless it is HD enabled. Unless you can benefit from the extra resolution, a flat panel screen just isn't as good as a CRT set. The blacks are a muddy grey and fast motion (such as football) leaves distracting trails across the screen. None of this is an issue with a CRT set.

If you can't afford an HD ready LCD/plasma at the moment, I suggest you keep on saving.

The next telly you buy will almost certainly give you a picture like no other



NE shopping

With a shop crammed full with funky labels, Lee Frise is confident his first fashion outlet will attract Darlington's ever-growing student population, he tells SHEILA WEBER

LEE FRISE: aiming at the 16 to 30 age group

Lee's new goal

LEE Frise scored a bit of an own goal himself when opening up his new fashion store. Not being a footie fan, he didn't realise that his launch day – June 10 – coincided with England's first World Cup encounter (which, as the rest of the nation knows, we won courtesy of an own goal by Paraguay).

But the 25-year-old is hoping that he'll soon be getting plenty of attention too as fashionable young people get to know what's on offer at his Hidden Soul Clothing shop on King Street in Darlington.

Lee is targeting the 16 to 30 age group, aiming to bring them an individual look. "The boutiques which do exist in the town can be expensive and the rest are chain stores," he says. "There are not many individual fashion boutiques in Darlington and I want to offer something with a bit of a difference."

Lee's venture has been a year in the planning. To get the project under way he drew on his fashion studies at college and his lifelong interest in clothes and style.

He used to work in the Miss Selfridge section at Binns store and managed the department for a while. "But then someone else was appointed and I decided this was the ideal time to branch out on my own," he says. "I didn't really want to work for another company and running my own business was something I had always wanted."

As the months went by, there were a few times he felt he might have taken on a bit too much. "The amount of work involved in setting it all up has been amazing," he says. "I had wanted to open up before now but things kept going wrong... lease, finance, stock. But we got there in the end."

Open six days a week, Hidden Soul Clothing offers clothes for both males and females – very casual, jeans, T-shirts, combats and the ubiquitous hoodies.

Lee is hoping to get some big names in – such as Animal and Quicksilver. "The clothes are relatively cheap, but good quality and with a good image. I should be able to beat most of my competitors on price as many charge through the teeth. I will be shopping around for the best deals," he says.

Fortunately, launch day was not a complete disaster. "Things were pretty quiet, as I had dou-

ble-booked with the England match. We did quite well in the morning, but the low level of afternoon trading was to be expected."

Lee says customers will get a friendly but professional service. "I am well clued up on fashion and I know how to gauge quality," he says. "I can design and make clothes myself, so I know what to look for."

Born in Darlington, Lee went to Longfield School and then on to the technical college before spending three years at Cleveland College of Art and Design where he gained an HND in fashion design.

He knows this won't be an easy ride. "But I don't mind the hard work when it's for my own business. It's not worth doing all this for someone else," he says.

Lee wanted to start off in Darlington as his home town, but he hopes to open up in Middlesbrough and Newcastle in due course.

"These are places which have quirky shops," he says. "Darlington has had nothing like that even though it has an ever-growing student population. There just hasn't been anything for them."

■ Hidden Soul will be holding a free fashion show at Aruba, the next door bar, on Wednesday, July 19. Entry is free, there will be special offers and drinks, and the band My Otherside will be playing.

■ Hidden Soul Clothing, King Street, Darlington (01325) 254346



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NE motoring



BEST OF BRITISH: the Bentley reacts brilliantly... even when treated badly

Bentley does it

Motoring correspondent IAN LAMMING behaves in an ungentlemanly fashion in an iconic British supercar – but it's all in the name of safety

IT'S the sort of phone call every car enthusiast dreams of. "Sorry to bother you and I know it's short notice but could you manage to join us for a driving day?" says the Bentley press office.

Keep calm, play it down and grab the diary to see the best way to dump all of my proper jobs before taking an archetypal British worker's through-gritted-teeth breath and replying coolly: "I'll see what I can do."

A couple of days later it's off to Elvington Airfield, near York, to find a line-up of glorious Bentleys standing to attention on the parade ground at the Second World War flying museum.

Bentley has had 60 years to perfect its design, its quality, its style; more than long enough to get it just right. Before me stand some of the shiniest examples of British workmanship, handcrafted, honed and polished at a factory in Crewe. Okay, the workings are German and courtesy of the Volkswagen Audi Group, but otherwise here is a product that you can be proud to call British.

Continental GT is the simply splendid 200mph coupe you see the top football players whizzing around in. Spirit is the stretched version with four doors and Buckingham Palace standards of luxury. Price tags start at a cool £117,000 but most of the Bentley Driving Experience test cars pack a few extras, taking the final bill well beyond the 120K mark. Which makes what I'm about to do to these icons of automotive engineering a bit ungentlemanly. In fact, more ungentlemanly conduct could not be found this side of the hot hatchback supermarket hang-out. I could have easily been wearing a Burberry cap and sporting a shell suit.

But let those nice people at Bentley explain. "It is now two years since we launched our 200mph supercar and we do feel we have a duty of care to our owners to actually teach them how it works," says Bentley Driving co-ordinator Nigel Stoddard. "In accident situations, people do strange things and if they have never felt the sensation through the pedal of anti-lock brakes activating they often come off the brakes or don't realise they can steer at the same time. So the skills you learn today could one day save your life."

The half day course roadshow travels Europe and has been designed with the help of five times Le Mans 24 hour racing driver Derek Bell. But it's not for the faint-hearted.

Under the watchful eye of an instructor, dri-

vers undergo three exercises – the anti-lock braking test, slalom course and fast lane change demonstration – in 2.5 tonne cars which boast all wheel drive, 6.0 litre W12 twin turbocharged engines with 552bhp on tap. That's enough to hurl you to 60mph in just over four seconds and on to a staggering 200mph. No wonder you need training.

The safety briefing concentrates on driver attitude, and adjusting the seats to the best position, which is a lot closer to the steering wheel than you would imagine. Keep that kink in your right leg at all costs, otherwise if you do have a crash the impact goes up your straightened limb and breaks your hips. It's the same with your arms. If they are outstretched when you have a bump then bones will shatter.

Wise words over, it's off to the cars and the first test – ABS braking. At one end of the runway sits little old me and my new found friend the Continental GT. I floor the accelerator and the car leaps forward, the world blurring Star Trek-like as we hurtle towards a set of orange cones. Into the cones at 95mph and the instructor claps his hands, the sign for me to brake. The tell-tale grating feeling on the pedal tells me the anti-lock brakes are at the maximum and then I hurl the Bentley beast to the right and then back to the left to avoid the obstacle. It is absolutely bewildering that we are in one piece, even more bewildering that we haven't even skidded. That's Bentley technology for you.

Next I am told to accelerate down the runway to 100mph. As it hits the ton, the instructor pulls on a tiny chrome switch on the transmission tunnel that normally activates the hydraulic handbrake. The car chimes, then comes to a dead stop in amazingly quick fashion. It's a safety device so that the front seat passenger can stop the car if the driver is taken ill, and it's another staggering demonstration.

Next comes the slalom test in the larger Spirit and the driver suddenly becomes a downhill skier hurling what is a very large vehicle through a series of tight cones. The instructor threatens me with a one beer per demolished cone penalty – enough for me to ensure a clear round, ha! Even at 65mph the car changes direction at will in another amazing example of Bentley know-how.

Finally to the most hooligan-type test, the fast lane change. This is to show the value of ESP (Electronic Stability Programme). ESP firmly in place and the car is truly magnificent, avoiding all the cones and coming through the chicane in once piece time and time again. Turn the ESP off and it's different matter, showing its value to modern safety.

All told, the driving course is as good as any car enthusiast could ever hope to experience and even has a diehard hack grinning from ear to ear with the exhilaration.



NE connections



WINDSWEEP COAST: the harbour at Seahouses and, right, Bamburgh Castle

Seafield Park in Seahouses, Northumberland, has beaten off national competition to be named Caravan Holiday Park of the Year. Women's Editor SARAH FOSTER finds out what it and the surrounding area have to offer



Caravan in comfort

THINK of the Northumberland coast and one word probably springs to mind: cold. No matter how the sun may shine, this raw and rugged piece of England seems always to catch the wind. Yet while this may preclude sunbathing, it doesn't detract from its wild beauty.

If the watchword is windy, then Seahouses is fairly typical. Lashed by the elements, the little town is flanked by miles of unspoilt beaches. You may have to wrap up, but it's worth it for the stunning views, and if you're after fresh air – well, it doesn't come much fresher than this.

We've come to Seahouses in a departure from our short break norm, to stay, not in a plush hotel, but at a caravan park. I'm hardly a camper and while my husband was once a Scout, it's fair to say that his days of roughing it are long gone. So it is with a touch of apprehension that we make the journey to Seafield Park. Of course, it's helped by its reputation – after all, how bad can an award winner be? – but there remains a lingering doubt. I know modern caravans aren't the tin cans of old, but does it follow that they're luxurious? Can they ever meet the standards of a good hotel room? We'll soon find out.

The first thing that strikes me about

Seafield is how professionally it's run. Arriving on a Saturday – and a pre-Bank Holiday at that – we're met by a friendly member of staff, who gives us a key and clear directions. In next to no time, we're through the security gate (a useful aid to peace of mind) and on our way to find our van.

Driving slowly along the road, we take in the park. It's pretty busy, with many caravans privately owned (you can tell by touches like garden gnomes) and while some are small, the vast majority are simply vast. I'm glad to see that in recent years, what were once pretty humble abodes have been truly transformed – now they really are like proper homes.

Arriving outside our van, I'm immediately impressed. Not only is it big – there may be only two of us, but we do need our space – but it's surrounded by lots of grass. I may be anti-social, but I like the thought of us being alone, and what better guarantee of this than our own secluded pad? For those with children, there's an ample play park, and duck ponds give a countryside feel.

The caravan itself is smart and clean, with every convenience you could wish for. There's a spacious living room with comfy seats, a proper kitchen and two reasonable sized bedrooms. The master bathroom – there's also an ensuite – is white and



STUNNING VIEWS: the Seafield Caravan Park at Seahouses

immaculate. We spend a night in blissful peace and wake up thoroughly refreshed – and ready for a session in the gym.

Since opening last summer, the Seafield Ocean Club has proved a major asset. Comprising a gym, 20 metre pool and health and beauty suite, it serves locals and site guests. After pumping some iron, I leave my husband for a spot of pampering.

The Indoceane, a Thalgo treatment with an ocean theme, comes highly recommended by Carolyn Britton, who runs Seafield with her father Ken. I'm happy to try it – well, who wouldn't be? – and after 90 minutes, I'm very glad I did. It starts with a sweet and savoury body scrub, which smells delicious on my skin, then after a shower, I'm expertly massaged. The final stage of the indulgence is being coated with soothing cream and left to relax. By the time I leave the salon, I'm practically comatose.

Before we leave Seahouses, there's time for

some sightseeing. With several places in easy reach, we plump for Holy Island. On the way there, we pass through Bamburgh, its ancient castle looming large, and soon we're cruising down the causeway. It goes without saying that you should check the tide times – or risk being stranded – but just the fun of the ocean crossing makes it worth the trip. We spend a pleasant morning on the car-free island, where sea birds throng the skies, before it's time to go home. One thing for sure: when it comes to caravans, I'll never think of tin cans again.

■ Seafield Caravan Park, Seahouses, Northumberland (01665) 720628, www.seafieldpark.co.uk or www.oceanclub.co.uk

■ Caravan hire, including full use of the Ocean Club, gas, electricity and bedding, starts from £195 for three nights in low season.



The caravan itself is smart and clean with every convenience. We spend a night in blissful peace and wake up thoroughly refreshed – and ready for a session in the gym

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