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INSIGHT

JANUARY 2017



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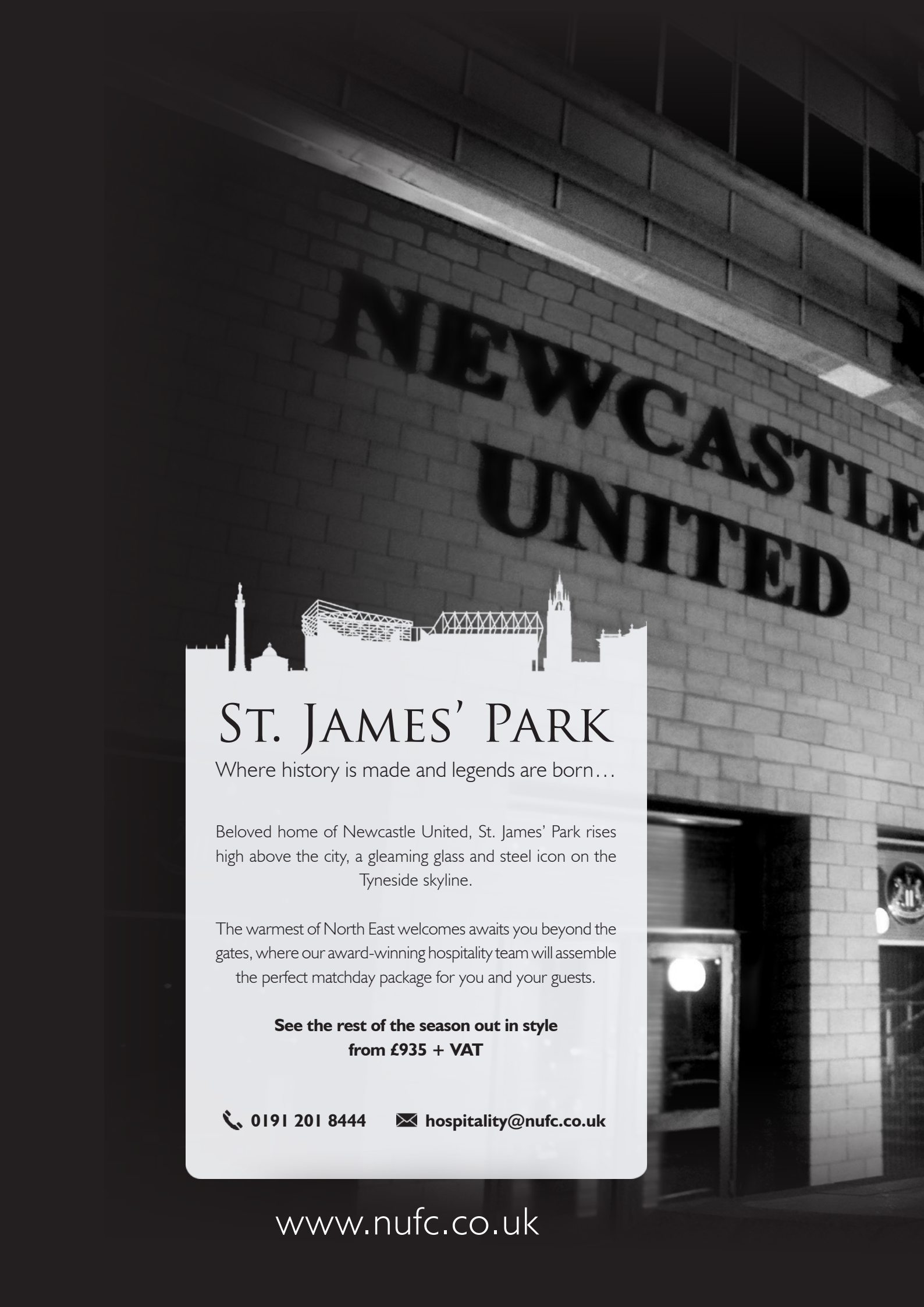
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foreword

Welcome to the January edition of Northern Insight

We kick off 2017 with another great issue jam-packed with content and coverage of some of the best social events from the busy festive period.

Our cover stars are Collingwood Legal who have recently gained industry recognition as a Legal 500 Top Tier Employment Firm.

We also visit the lovely Dobson and Parnell for our Business Lunch review, look at local entrepreneur Rob Armstrong's fantastic work at Hadrian School and take a trip to Glasgow for our popular Out and About feature.

All in all much to enjoy and enthuse. In a period of renewal and reflection may I wish everyone a Happy New Year and all the very best for what I'm sure will be an exciting 12 months.

Thank you for your continued support. Till next month...

Michael Grahamslaw, Publisher

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CONSTRUCTION BEGINS ON HIGH POINT VIEW



Work has begun to create a new residential development in North Tyneside, regenerating a sought-after seafront site which was previously occupied by a derelict hotel.

The High Point View development of 14 townhouses is being built on the Promenade in Whitley Bay, replacing the 'eyesore' High Point Hotel which was demolished earlier this year.

The project, a joint venture between developers High Point View Ltd and North Tyneside Council, forms part of the council's £36m Seafront Master Plan, which is regenerating the coastline from St Mary's Lighthouse to Cullercoats Bay.

High Point View will also increase the local provision

for family housing as the development will include private gardens and car parking for each household.

Contractor Northern Bear Building Services Ltd has estimated completion by mid-2017. The project has been designed by Miller Partnership Architects while law firm Sintons has handled the real estate development and construction law matters.

The properties, which are a mix of three, four and five bedrooms, all offer uninterrupted sea views with floor-to-ceiling balconies overlooking the Promenade. Each property will also be eco-friendly and include the latest automated technology to control heating and appliances.

In the few weeks the development has been

marketed, developers have reported "significant" interest from potential buyers.

Alok Loomba, Partner in Sintons' Real Estate team, said: "The project is transforming a run-down part of the beautiful Whitley Bay coastline into a very desirable residential development. This will not only bring much-needed family home provision to the coast, but also means that it will be visually attractive and will fit perfectly into the ongoing regeneration of the surrounding area.

"We are very pleased to have been instructed on this project as specialists from our teams are all working together to bring the High Point View scheme to fruition."

£100K CHARITY TARGET FOR 100 YEARS IN BUSINESS

A North East accountancy firm has set itself an ambitious target to raise £100,000 for local and national charities to mark its centenary year.

Robson Laidler Accountants and Business Advisors, which is based in Jesmond, will celebrate its 100th birthday in 2020. Staff have pledged to raise £1,000 for every year it has been in business by then.

Over the next four years, the firm will seek to raise the substantial amount of cash through various fundraising activities including next year's Three Peaks challenge.

The firm has given all staff 7.5 hours per year to volunteer within work hours. Some initiatives so far have seen staff painting garden furniture at a community bowling club in Newcastle, bag packing at supermarkets and talking to young people about careers in accountancy at local schools.

The firm asked staff to vote for a Charity of the Year to give focus to the fundraising activities. For the first 12 months, Dementia UK has been selected to receive the bulk of the funds raised.

The staff are also aiming to achieve 100 different successes including supporting 100 charities and taking part in 100 different charitable activities.

Robson Laidler has set up a Just Giving page to help achieve its fundraising target. Visit www.justgiving.com/fundraising/Robson-Laidler to donate.



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MIDDLESBROUGH RIVERSIDE'S ACCESS CONTROL STEPS UP A LEAGUE

A Newcastle-based manufacturer of fingerprint readers has played a crucial role in ensuring the safety of the 33,000 fans who regularly fill Middlesbrough FC's Riverside stadium.

As part of the £5m investment the club made for the start of the current football season, the Riverside stadium has focused on improving site security for staff and fans alike with access control for full time staff and part time safety stewards becoming a priority.

Graham Smith, Middlesbrough FC's Project Manager, explained: "We can have around 700 staff working at the Riverside during a home game. It is vitally important that we know exactly who is working on these days as they play such a vital role in ensuring the safety of the fans, the players and the other staff."

Access control suppliers, Progeny Access Control, recommended and provided a new, state of the art access control system for the stadium with finger readers from ievio Ltd. By using fingerprint data, theft and fraud issues with the previous identity cards can now be avoided.



LABC SUCCESS FOR NEWCASTLE ARCHITECT'S HOSPICE PROJECT

A hospice project designed by the award-winning Newcastle architectural practice JDDK Architecture has won a prestigious LABC Building Excellence Award as the Best Inclusive Building at the Grand Final Awards that were held recently in London.

A panel of industry experts judged a list of the highest quality projects from around England and Wales to reward the best in technical innovation, sustainability and design. This included grade I listed Thorpe Hall, a project designed by JDDK. Rescued from dereliction by Lady Sue Ryder in 1986, it has since been a hospice at the heart of Peterborough's community.

The £6m refurbishment of the Sue Ryder Hospice at Thorpe Hall required the JDDK team to engage in extensive discussions with English Heritage and Peterborough City Council in 2010 which led to the successful planning application of 2011. The design proposals recommended a single storey timber framed structure containing 20 ground floor rooms with en-suite facilities, as well as large individual patio doors allowing patients' beds to be easily wheeled out into the landscaped gardens, a feature that particularly impressed the judges.



NORTHUMBERLAND YOUNGSTERS BENEFIT FROM MINIBUS

Hexham's Calvert Trust Kielder has been presented with a new Lord's Taverners wheelchair accessible minibus.

Since 1976, Lord's Taverners has placed over 1,100 accessible minibuses across schools in the UK. This year marks the 40th anniversary of the first minibus giveaway and to celebrate, the charity will be giving away a record 40 minibuses in 2016. The iconic Lord's Taverners minibuses provide disadvantaged and disabled young people with the chance to engage with their local community by getting more access to the facilities on offer while building important life skills in the process.

Located at its award-winning centre within Kielder Water & Forest Park near Hexham, Calvert Trust Kielder is a registered charity which enables guests of all abilities to achieve their potential through the challenge of outdoor adventure with professional instructor-led activities in stunning surroundings. The new minibus will help staff at Calvert Trust Kielder transport guests to and from water-based activities such as sailing, canoeing, kayaking and motor boating, as well as other trips further afield.

PUMP MANUFACTURER INVESTS IN STAFF TRAINING

Sunderland-based shower pump manufacturer Salamander Pumps is strengthening its commitment to customer service, innovation and product development with an in-house apprenticeship programme that has seen its first student graduate into a permanent role, while seven of its staff are combining work with studying for qualifications.

Salamander has appointed 22-year-old Jayson Shepherd following a successful three-year apprenticeship to complete his HNC in Mechanical Engineering and an NVQ level three in Engineering Technical Support.

Stepping into Jayson's shoes is Lewis Wilkes, who is studying for an HNC in Mechanical Engineering and

becomes the company's second full time apprentice.

Gareth Richards, Technical Director at Salamander Pumps, said: "We committed to an apprenticeship programme several years ago to encourage young people into the industry and promote a 'grow our own skills base' culture. As an ex-apprentice myself I have first-hand experience of the opportunities it presents for young people and their employers."

Seven members of the technical, administration and support teams are also combining their roles while studying for a range of qualifications including manufacturing, engineering, sales, business administration and contact centre operations.



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CHECK OUT FLEXIBLE WORKSPACE

Superfast broadband and managed office space combine at Metropolitan House to power growth for an expanding online consumer advice service, says Lynn Gate, owner of The Office Co.

The New Year maybe timely for aspiring entrepreneurs to see resolutions of going it alone become a reality but starting a business can be tough. Aside from locking in finance, building a team, finding your way in a competitive market and securing new clients, there are other things that go into the balancing act of ensuring a start-up gets off to winning ways.

And that includes finding the right workspace with the technology infrastructure to support growth - securing the right package can be an intricate dance, which is why smart enterprising businesses find spaces where they can share costs and services such as IT networks and Wi-Fi services.

That's the view of Lynn and her tenant, Checkatrade's Steve Ashford, who runs the North East, North West and Scotland section of a business that has over 23,000 trade and services on its books and has been going since 1998.

Operating from 1,800 sq. m of commercial accommodation at Metropolitan House in Gateshead, and currently employing 20 people serving 800 members, Checkatrade provides consumer protection services - it vets hundreds of builders, plumbers, and electricians among others each year and helps people to find the right trade.

Lynn says that Checkatrade is able to take advantage of an existing commercial site offering dedicated future proof broadband, which also has the capacity to handle thousands of emails and high volumes of website traffic on a daily basis.

A view supported by Steve, who adds: "Metropolitan House is a great place to do business. We benefit from good yet cost effective IT services as part of an integrated package that also sees us enjoy a top class commercial environment without being tied into restrictive lease agreements."

Workspace at Metropolitan House combines the flexibility required for small enterprises like Checkatrade with a practical and cost effective lease package. This allows tenants to take advantage of hired facilities such as a reception, and tailored services that include inbound call handling and deliveries.

Steve also feels he benefits from what he describes as a landlord who 'really listens to what tenants' want', adding that Lynn Gate and her team have created a friendly and happy environment.

"The inclusive superfast broadband package is just one part of a great service that meets the needs of small but ambitious firms like us.

"The Office Co.'s versatility allows it to provide additional space quickly as and when we need it, while the manned reception is a key part of a responsive service for the many tradespeople who visit or simply call by the office to drop-off their details."

Steve Ashford said the community spirit and arrangements on offer at Metropolitan House are aligned to his own needs and views; and will undoubtedly help as the business gears-up for continued growth in the next 12 months.

"This year will only get busier for us as our services expand and more tradespeople come on board. So, the outlook is bright for Checkatrade and the Office Co. will continue to play an important part as a vibrant hub that's a great place to do business."

The Office Co. services are built around understanding the needs of clients, who range from sole traders and start-ups to well established small businesses.

Indeed, it's the ability to adapt and move with the times, offering flexible packages around an open-door policy, that differentiates it from others in a sector renowned for inflexibility, self-interest and restrictive practices.

Visit www.theofficeco.co.uk

SMEs: GET IT RIGHT IN 2017



Calibre's Steve Nelson says SMEs face many IT challenges but an effective strategy can be the key to success

The cloud is a technology that many are interested in says Steve Nelson, operations director of Newcastle IT firm Calibre Secured Networks, but its growing adoption will be just one of several challenges facing SMEs in 2017.

Over the coming 12 months it's vital that owner/managers have the necessary knowledge to be empowered and more efficient in their business to deliver customer satisfaction, improve employee engagement and facilitate access to new markets.

And of course, it will be technology that will be at the heart of much of the transformation now happening; compelling regional businesses to become more efficient and driving the changes and new processes that will help to deliver long term advantage, as well as the cost and time saving benefits SMEs yearn to have at their fingertips.

However, it's not simply a case of buying technology, sitting back and waiting for the efficiency miracle to happen. Businesses will need to understand foremost what is required of their organisation in order to improve and should be asking themselves some deep-reaching, searching questions: what are the biggest risks, what processes need to be implemented, and what technology leadership is required?

Increasing convergence - the tendency for data and voice networks to be able to travel along one single network - will also be a key area of interest for SMEs as they push forward. A growing number

of new voice-over-IP (VoIP), Wi-Fi and compression technologies are becoming increasingly affordable and attractive - in many ways their flexibility and scalability will make them extremely suitable for regional enterprise as it forges ahead.

However, in the headlong rush to a utopian future, firms will need to challenge themselves to take a more considered look at the equipment they really need. They will have to be selective and carefully research the options, looking to invest in technologies that will deliver ROI and have a positive and direct impact.

But to do this will require many to develop an effective IT strategy. So as with any area of procurement, it will be about working out the fundamentals first, possibly in tandem with an external partner who can offer best practice, expertise and a degree of objectivity.

SMEs are the engines of regional economic growth and technology will continue to be the fuel that powers their success; but a sudden, unexpected IT failure can be catastrophic. From employee productivity to customer service, it will remain an essential requirement to maintain the smooth and efficient running of all aspects of the business all of the time.

A simple IT problem can wreak havoc if left unchecked. Unreliable networks, inaccessible data, inadequate anti-virus software can all bring a business to its knees in a matter of minutes, so a proactive approach to preventing IT problems happening in the first place has to be the best way to ensure there's no loss of momentum.

Another issue that will continue to be challenging as the year unfolds and where there are undoubted requirements for SMEs to act before it's too late, covers security - an organisation's IT security is only as strong as its weakest link. As more firms migrate to the cloud and embrace the new technologies coming onto the market at a seemingly relentless rate, keeping up with an ever changing IT landscape and the threat it presents, will undoubtedly prove challenging.

Maintaining across-the-board protection for your systems will see more and more of us staying one step ahead of the on-going flow of new, and ever more complex security threats. This will require an unrelenting, determined response and specialist expertise, but with shrewd investment in the right technology and IT support today, North East SMEs will be well placed to become the large, industry defining global corporates of tomorrow.



ANOTHER YEAR, ANOTHER CHRISTMAS GOLF DAY FOR NEWCASTLE GOLF CLUB'S SPONSORS

Sponsors of Newcastle United Golf Club scrubbed up on their driving skills in preparation for the Annual turkey cup competition.

The North East businesses were warmed through with mulled wine and mince pies on the course whilst enjoying some classic Christmas tunes half way round.

The December competition is the club's second annual golf day for the sponsors following their traditional summer event held in June.





COLLINGWOOD LEGAL

JOB SATISFACTION AT COLLINGWOOD LEGAL

Not long after its industry recognition as a Legal 500 Top Tier employment law firm, Collingwood Legal is once again starting the New Year on an upwards trajectory.

From investment in new infrastructure and skilled hires, through to award wins and an upsurge in new contracts, the team have quickly become established as the employment lawyers of choice here in the North East.

Twelve months ago, Paul McGowan's main goal was to showcase the fantastic work carried out by the Collingwood Legal team in helping clients navigate some of the trickiest aspects of employment law.

Managing Partner of the firm he founded in 2010, he and his fellow Partners Sarah Fitzpatrick and Paul Johnstone were keen to celebrate the talent within their ranks and the positive outcomes achieved on behalf of clients.

"We've grown year on year since the business was established and our success is very much down to a team effort," said Paul. "Within our firm are some very talented individuals and we wanted them to receive the credit they're due for their hard work.

"I had no idea how well that would go though and we're thrilled with what's been achieved."

Within the last year, Collingwood Legal would go on to become a Legal 500 Top Tier practice.

It would also win Employment Team of the Year at the Northern Law Awards, where its specialist employment lawyer Jane Sinnamon was shortlisted for Rising Star – Young Lawyer of the

Year, in recognition of her exceptional contribution and significant impact to practice.

Both developments have formed a big milestone for the team.

"Much of the work carried out by Collingwood Legal is confidential, which makes publicizing our work quite hard to do," explained Paul.

"When you're dealing with employment law, especially related to disciplinary procedure, it is often critical to keep things between those involved to avoid any adverse reputational issues for either party.

"It means we can have some major wins for our clients but that we can't say a word about them."

What can be publicized however is the firm's great inroads into the education and banking sectors, where clients have been benefiting from the expertise offered by Collingwood Legal's eight employment lawyers.

The practice has also seen an increase in the number of instructions from senior executives looking to leave big roles in

large organisations and who need help planning complicated and sensitive exits.

"The business continues to grow and while our heartland will always be the North East, we carry out work nationally and we will continue to push on into different regions and markets," Paul said.

"We are passionately committed to getting the best for the clients we represent and what's lovely is that word is getting around."

In addition to achieving some great outcomes for clients in 2016, there have been other highlights too. Paul Johnstone and Sarah Fitzpatrick were invited to present at the Chartered Institute of Personal Development's (CIPD) annual legal update and the firm is continuing its joint training arrangement for mock employment tribunals with ACAS.

"Basically we are incredibly lucky because we're doing work we love and as well as bringing new clients in, we're retaining those we already have and building those relationships. It's a privilege to work with the organisations, bodies and individuals we now have on our portfolio.

"This success is driving us to work harder on behalf of clients - we'll always go the extra mile to get the result they need because at the end of the day, that's just who we are and what we do."



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David Banks, Head of the Family Team, has been qualified for over 30 years. He is born and bred in the north east and has spent most of his professional career in the area. He has overseen the recent expansion of the Family Department.

"Our success is evidenced by the firm's continuing expansion. We are entering an exciting period of growth for the firm and are now able to provide a complete family law service throughout the north east. We look forward to welcoming clients old and new, all of whom can be certain that their case will be dealt with professionally and in a cost-effective manner".

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MIND THE (PAY) GAP

In its latest efforts to address the pay gap between male and female workers, the Government is planning to require large employers to annually publish data on their gender pay gap, seemingly in the hope that this will encourage private sector employers to tackle the issue head-on.



Rebecca Fielding

This mandatory reporting process will apply to employers with at least 250 employees as at 5 April each year. We anticipate that this new process will come into effect from April 2017 with the first deadline for employers to publish the relevant data on their websites being 4 April 2018, on the basis that employers will have 12 months to collate, analyse and publish the data each year. Whilst 4 April 2018 might admittedly sound like some way off, the potential administrative burden of these Regulations on employers should not be underestimated.

On 6 December 2016 the Government published its revised final draft Equality Act 2010 (Gender Pay Gap Information) Regulations 2017 (the "Regulations"), providing some welcome clarification as to what an employer's obligations are going to be under the new reporting process.

In particular, who will qualify as a 'relevant employee' for the purposes of identifying whether or not an employer is required to comply with the Regulations has now been clarified and it is clear that casual/bank staff and even potentially self-employed contractors will need to be included in the headcount and subsequent data analysis, depending on the exact nature of their engagement. However, the Government has acknowledged that it may be difficult in practice for employers to include all workers in their calculations, so the amended Regulations now include an express

exception to the reporting requirements in respect of workers whom the employer does not have (and it is not reasonably practicable to obtain) the relevant data. This will no doubt be welcome news to those employers who engage a lot of casual workers.

The annual information that relevant employers will be required to publish on their websites is:

- the organisation's overall gender pay gap (expressed as a percentage), using both the mean and median hourly rate of pay for female and male employees;
- the proportion of male and female employees in each of the organisation's four pay quartiles;
- the organisation's overall bonus gender pay gap (expressed as a percentage), using both the mean and median bonus payments received by female and male employees over the preceding 12 month period; and
- the proportion of female and male employees who received a bonus in that period.

The revised Regulations confirm that the calculations only need to take into account 'full-pay relevant employees', permitting employers to omit from their calculations anyone receiving reduced (or no) pay due to being on a period of leave. This addresses concerns that an employer's pay gap could be negatively affected if they happened to have a significant number of female

employees receiving statutory maternity pay during the relevant pay period.

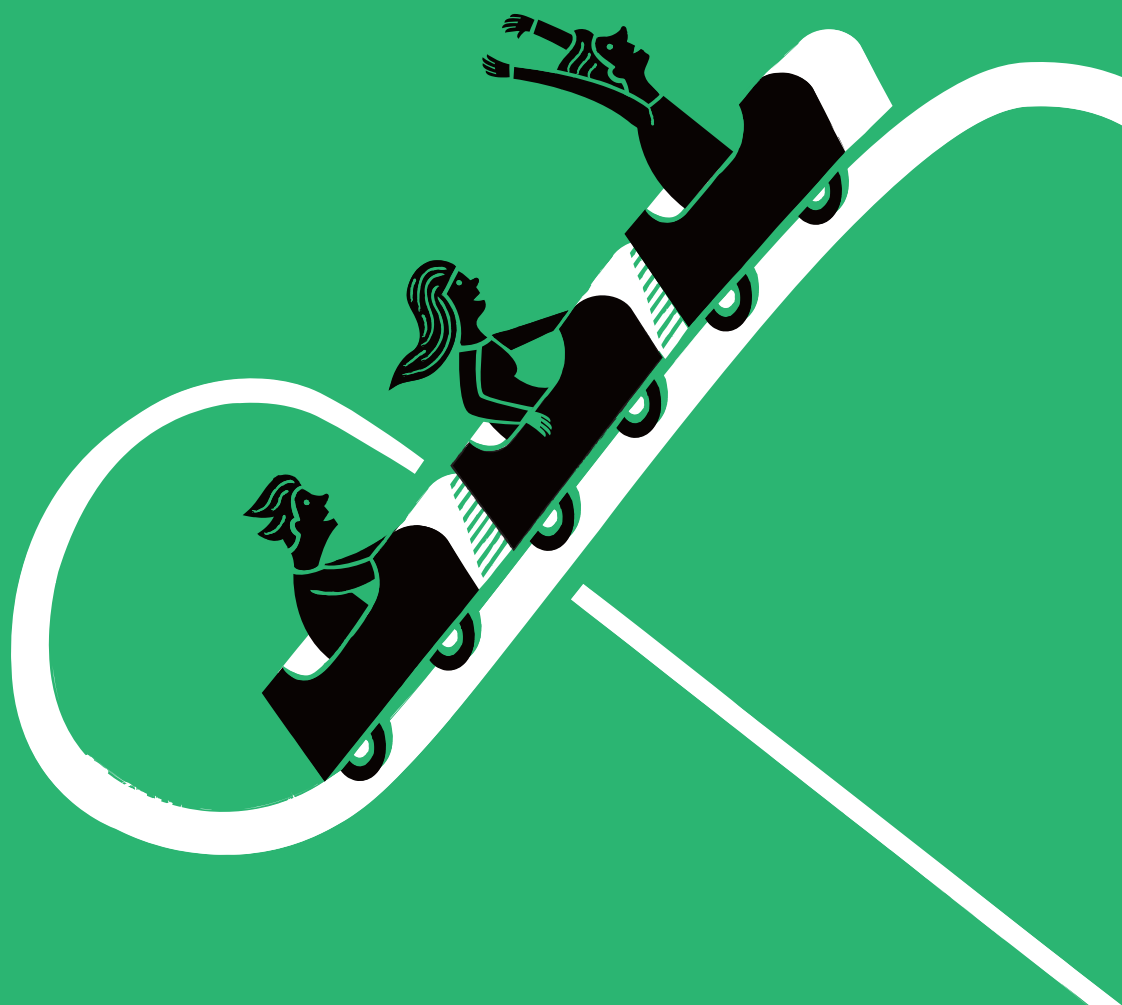
In terms of what employers can be doing now to prepare for the implementation of the Regulations next year, you should start thinking about:

- whether you are likely to be a 'relevant employer' as at 5 April 2017, by reference to the number of individuals you engage and the nature of those engagements;
- analysing employees' remuneration packages and identifying what payments will need to be included in the necessary calculations;
- potentially carrying out the pay gap calculations now (for example using April 2016 figures) in order to identify whether you are likely to have a considerable pay gap in 2017; and
- if you suspect you are likely to have a significant gap, how you can explain this gap in any accompanying narrative (including a narrative is optional under the Regulations, but advisable where the gap is significant and could have negative PR implications).

Once Parliament has approved the revised Regulations the Government has confirmed that non-statutory guidance will be published to accompany the Regulations. As there are still some areas of uncertainty surrounding the precise calculations, this guidance is eagerly-awaited by us all.

Rebecca Fielding is an Associate in the Employment team at Newcastle law firm Sintons. To speak to Rebecca about how the Regulations could affect your business, contact her on 0191 226 3740 or Rebecca.fielding@sintons.co.uk

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FINANCIAL NEEDS IN DIVORCE — HOW MUCH IS ENOUGH?



Sarah Crilly

Sarah Crilly, Associate Solicitor in the Family law team at Ward Hadaway, looks at the latest thinking on the issue of how much money divorcing couples need.

Depending on the length of the marriage, the starting point for the division of assets on divorce is equality.

Although this may provide a fair outcome in what are known as the "big money" cases, where the equal division of assets will provide each party with finances beyond their needs, what happens where the equal division of assets provides for an unfair result? What if one spouse is to look after the children while the other spends £3,000 a month on handbags? Are these both classified as financial needs?

There are two types of needs which may persuade the court to depart from the provision of equality: income needs and capital needs.

What constitutes a need in family cases, amongst other factors, will depend on the available income of the parties, the length of the marriage, the age of the parties and the lifestyle prior to the marriage. As a result, spending £3,000 on handbags could very much be a need depending on the circumstances of the case as a whole.

In June 2016, guidance was published by the

Family Justice Council on the definition of 'financial needs'. The aim of this was to promote a consistent definition in the courts and also assist the growing number of people in the family courts who are appearing without legal representation. The guidance addresses the fact that the needs of both parties must be considered and must be fair to both parties.

One of the most important statements of the guidance is that a "party may be expected to suffer some reduction in their standard of living having regard to the overall objective of a transition to independence." It is hoped that this will prevent the court from accepting over-estimated claims of future financial needs on the basis that future dependence between the parties is undesirable.

Financial orders such as maintenance, which seek to provide one party with a dependence on the other, either for life or until remarriage, are also viewed unfavourably under the guidelines because they ignore the aim of self-sufficiency and independence for both parties. It is important to note that this particular analysis is not relevant to

the provision of child maintenance as this is dealt with through separate provisions.

The guidance also states that "where resources are modest, the children's need for a home with their primary carer may predominate." In practice, this will affect families where a 50/50 split of the assets and income will not work due to one parent taking on the role of the primary caregiver. In these situations, the court will recognise the ability of the breadwinner to offset any disparity in a divorce settlement with future earnings potential. The aim is to ensure that financially dependent children are cared for by the primary caregiver in the short-term with the least disruption to the independent lives of either party.

Whether the guidance provided by the Family Justice Council will succeed in its efforts to clarify the definition of 'financial needs' is not yet known.

It is however thought that the depth and detail of the guidance will surely help direct the courts to a fairer settlement by encouraging judges to consider a wider range of factors than they have done previously.

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ievo Ltd. WELCOMES NEW REGIONAL MANAGER

ievo Ltd, Newcastle-based designer and manufacturer of biometric fingerprint recognition systems, has appointed Cloe Snell as Regional Manager for the North.

Covering the area North of the M62, Cloe started with the company in September 2016 with an aim to develop, manage and support ievo Ltd's ever-growing installer and integrator network.

She commented: "My role as Regional Manager is to help support our current installers and integrators whilst also developing new partnerships across the region. I have ten years of experience working with security installers which has allowed me to build up first-hand knowledge of the sector and security systems. ievo is well respected within the industry, with excellent client and product support. It's great to be part of a growing business in a growing market!"

Richard Forsyth, ievo's UK and Ireland Sales Manager, added: "We are really pleased to have Cloe on board. She is already doing a fantastic job working alongside current installers and developing new business with her wealth of account management experience within the security sector."



AWARD WINNING LOCAL HAIRDRESSER JOINS PAUL BRYAN SALON

Jesmond-based Paul Bryan Salon have strengthened their team by appointing James Fitzakerly as Floor Manager and Lead Educator.

A renowned Curly Hair Specialist, trained by Beverly Hills' finest and an immensely popular figure on the local hairdressing scene, James, formerly of The Sandyford Salon, brings with him a wealth of experience and a unique set of customer service skills.

During his tenure in Sandyford, James won a string of awards and built up a loyal following in the process.

In his latest venture, James is looking forward to welcoming clients old and new to this chic salon in the leafy suburb of Jesmond and remains passionate about delivering bespoke hair tailoring to those in the area.

Established in 1994, Paul Bryan have been providing exceptional customer experience for over two decades. Their range of specialist services include cutting, restyling, colouring, hair extensions and wedding hair as well as beauty treatments from Shellac and Acrylic nails to individual eyelash extensions.

By placing the customer at the centre of everything they do, both James and the Paul Bryan team share the same core values and are set to be the perfect fit for each other in the years ahead.

CRATHORNE HALL APPOINTS NEW SALES MANAGER

Crathorne Hall is pleased to announce the appointment of Becky Edmundson as Sales Manager. Becky brings a wealth of knowledge with 16 years' experience in sales and customer relations.

Becky will be responsible for ensuring the continued delivery of Crathorne Hall's exceptional customer service to its corporate clients.

A recent £4m restoration included the revival of 17 bedrooms and the hotel's County Suites. This included the integration of new technologies such as state-of-the-art audio visual equipment and WIFI.

Crathorne Hall has also recently invested a further £80,000 as part of its continued investment in the Edwardian country house hotel. Working with 10 Design, the hotel has upgraded the Nancy Tennant Lounge, the original billiards room of the house.

Crathorne Hall is renowned for delivering high standards to its guests. The appointment of Becky along with the continued investment to maintain the beautiful country house shows Crathorne's continued dedication to delivering an outstanding guest experience.



A NEW HEAD OF OPERATIONS FOR GROWING LEISURE GROUP

Newcastle-headquartered Cairn Group has welcomed a new Head of Operations to its North East team as it continues its UK-wide expansion.

Former Head of Restaurants at global chain CAU, Gemma Stocks brings almost 10 years' experience to her new role with Cairn Group, a position created to help launch new business collaborations and developments both in the region and further afield.

As Head of Operations for Cairn Group, Gemma will be responsible for the recruitment of junior, manager and senior positions across a number of the businesses' 31 hotels and over 30 bars whilst helping drive the internal culture throughout the group, which employs over 3,000 staff.

Cairn Group HR Director Richard Adams said: "With her impressive background and wealth of expertise, we have no doubt Gemma will provide integral support in escalating the company towards great opportunities both in the region and across the UK. We are looking forward to what the future holds for Cairn Group with Gemma on board and are sure she will prove an excellent asset to our operation."

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MAKE 2017 YOUR YEAR OF MENTORING

BY THE ENTREPRENEURS' FORUM



Behind every business success you'll find great people, something our region prides itself on having in abundance. A quick visit to any 'about us' webpage and you'll discover the leaders, managers, shareholders, sales people and customer service teams that drive the organisation forward, but it's often the ones not named here that are having the most impact.

The relationship between a business leader and their mentor is extremely important, an attitude supported by almost half of Entrepreneurs' Forum members, who cite a mentor as their key source of business advice; after only their accountant and the Forum itself.

It is reassuring for business people to be able to draw on the experience of people who have been there and done it all before. While success in business, especially in the early phases, comes down to the drive of the founder and their team, mentoring can help entrepreneurs avoid pitfalls and see opportunities as they arise and the business grows.

At the Entrepreneurs' Forum, mentoring works in a number of different ways, often beginning with our drop-in mentoring sessions, round-table debates or a conversation with another business owner at one of our events. It can take the form of a cup of coffee and a chat, to a more structured, intelligent matching programme, but whether it's formal or informal, our mentoring is always altruistic, peer-to-peer and free.

The kind of advice provided by a mentor varies from person to person, and depends on circumstance. From strategic thought, and ideas

about motivation and management, to financial control and international expansion, no business subject is off topic.

Alastair Waite, perhaps best known for scaling-up Onyx Group and engineering firm Altec, is a passionate advocate of mentoring and was voted North East Mentor of the Year in 2015. Always willing to offer his support, Alastair is not only vocal about the benefits of the mentoring he delivers, but also the benefits that being mentored has had on his life and career:

"All businesses have common problems they need to solve and sometimes the people involved are just a little too close to the situation.

"I work on the principle of 'you don't know what you don't know', and through mentoring I get to meet some really nice people and hear stories about how they have built their business. It's quite a privileged relationship and I probably get as much out of the process as the mentee.

"To give something without an expectation of future return is a nicer way of doing things, but also what you give in this way comes back at least tenfold."

James Robson MBE was North East Mentor of the

Year for 2016. James founded and built Exwold Technology, a company he's still involved with as a non-executive director. He now supports and invests in a number of growing businesses and mentors people through the Entrepreneurs' Forum, as well as other organisations:

"I strongly believe in supporting other entrepreneurs and I'd encourage individuals in business to support start-ups and aspirational business leaders to enable the economy to grow and create employment in the North East."

Within the Entrepreneurs' Forum there are almost 100 mentors who offer their time altruistically to support their peers. In the North East's wider business community there are many more that are willing to pass on their vital experience, much of which cannot be learned in the classroom, or on a training course.

With the value of both giving support and benefiting from mentoring in mind, why don't you make 2017 the year that you reach out to someone? Whether you're looking for a helping hand or offering your experience to a growing business, we guarantee that the benefits of mentoring will be hugely rewarding.

The Entrepreneurs' Forum support aspirational North East business owners in all sectors, helping to expand their networks, improve leadership skills, share experience, create new opportunities and grow their business. For more information, call 0191 500 7780 or visit www.entrepreneursforum.net

Meet...

*Kathryn
& Elsa*

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ANNE BROMLEY

Travel Bureau

How did you get into travel?

During my time at university I did some work as a holiday rep for a tour operator. When I graduated, I decided that I wanted to work in business travel although I wasn't really sure why, as I had no experience, I just liked the idea of the corporate side of it.

My original plan was to return to the North East to work; and I contacted a number of corporate travel companies with little success. I had friends in Manchester, so I moved there, working first for a tour operator specialising in the Greek Islands, moving later into my preferred sector of business travel. I was ambitious and eager to learn but the pace wasn't fast enough and an opportunity with Singapore Airlines presented itself.

In 1990 I returned to North East for personal reasons and came to Travel Bureau as assistant manager in the corporate travel department.

What was your first business premises?

The business was founded in 1961 by Rose & John Scott, in December this year we will be 55. It was first located at 61 High Street, Gosforth. It was originally a record shop, Rose acquired a room at the back of the shop, slowly the record shop declined and they took over. In 1970 they moved to 69 High Street, which is where we are now. It's the site of the first ever Greggs store.

This is a sizeable building, with three floors, when they first took it over they leased the other floors out. During the 70s, 80s & 90s the business became one of the largest independent travel companies in the North East, they were servicing corporate clients like P&G, Swan Hunter and the DSS.

How has the company grown?

In 1988 John Scott Junior took over the business alongside colleague Jeff Bell and continued its growth. When John and Jeff were ready to retire and leave the business they asked four of us if we were interested in doing a management buyout. This was around 2006 and the company was performing at its peak.

We deliberated for quite some time but, in the end, two of the original four, along with current co-owner Jeanne Lally, who had worked for the business in the 1990s, proceeded. Jeanne had recently relocated back to the North East and, after a chance meeting in M&S one day, I was delighted when she agreed to join us. So in February 2008 Jeanne, Graham and I took over the business. Graham retired a couple of years ago leaving Jeanne and I as 50/50 shareholders.

How did the recession affect your business approach?

When we took over the business in 2008 we were full of excitement, and then later that year the recession hit. It was a bit of a double whammy for Travel Bureau, as Northern Rock was a corporate client, and their employees and board members booked their personal holidays through us, which had a significant impact on the business.

We took a good look at where we were and developed a strategy to invest our way out of the recession. We wanted to come out stronger, with a contemporary business that was fit for purpose, to service the 21st Century traveller. We had a clear vision, but we didn't realise how long the recession was going to last.

On the corporate side, much of our volume was

derived from the public sector, which suffered in the recession. We made a strategic decision to steer towards the private sector, so when contracts came up for renewal we wouldn't tender for them, concentrating on commercial clients.

How has your market changed?

The internet and the rise of the low cost carriers turned the industry on its head. The legacy airlines were forced to review their business models, strategy and fare structures. Previously, lower fares required a Saturday night which was only beneficial to the leisure traveller, now fares with a two or three night minimum stay resulted in savings for the business community, great from a client's perspective.

Simultaneously, the airlines started to reduce (and then eradicate) the commission paid to travel companies. This had been their sole means of income and led to the introduction of transaction fees. Clients now had the option, they could book direct, online and save money on transaction fees by bypassing the agent.

In the corporate world, duty of care became the 'buzz' word. We found that companies didn't know where their people were, and employees were booking here, there and everywhere. There was little to no control over costs. Business travel agents became travel management companies, actively managing travel programmes in line with company objectives rather than just taking orders and making bookings. Then came self-booking tools, where clients could book their own travel in a controlled environment, with the support and back-up of a professional travel company, leaving the travel consultant to book the more complicated itineraries.



What are your unique selling points?

It's the service we provide; we ensure that we tailor it to the specific needs of individual clients. It's not a one-size-fits-all approach, it's very personal. We like to understand who they are, their objectives and our part in helping them to achieve these. But we don't rest on our laurels, as they change and develop so must we. I believe a lot of companies say this, but we actually do deliver on it.

How do you handle internal motivation and staff rewards?

In our corporate team, we don't offer a bonus scheme because the needs of the clients have to come first; we don't want to encourage the team to charge their clients more in exchange for personal reward. We believe in paying people their worth. We pay decent salaries, we celebrate long service with wine or flowers. We try and make sure the team are involved within the decision making process and we like individuals to take ownership in areas they are strong in. We do annual reviews, invest in training, have dress-down Friday each

week and, once a month, we have Fizzy Friday, where we will open the fizz and have a glass, it's good for morale.

How does your motivation now compare with that when you took over the company?

I'm more motivated now because I feel responsible for the team. To pay their salaries, we have to stay ahead of the curve, because the industry is so dynamic. It's an industry that you love or hate, I love it and that's motivation enough.

Tell me a bit about your business structure.

The business structure is very different to when we first took over the business. There were three of us then, I headed up the corporate division, Jeanne Lally was commercial director and Graham Knight was our retail director, looking after the leisure side of the business. Now, Jeanne and I are joint Managing Directors, we each own 50% of the business.

This year we launched Travel Bureau Destinations to bring customers into the UK, where usually

our role is taking domestic clients to other parts of the world. We want to create "money can't buy" experiences for people visiting the UK and especially share the wonderful North East with the rest of the world.

How does mentoring feature in your business?

In one respect, Jeanne, my co-director has been a great mentor. I didn't really know anything about running a business when we took over and she has been instrumental in helping me develop.

A few years ago I joined the Entrepreneurs' Forum for my own personal development. This was about growing my confidence and developing as an individual to become a better business leader. I have benefited from the mentoring programme and found the advice and discussion invaluable; I'm planning more sessions. The Entrepreneurs' Forum also gives you access to business leaders through its events and conference programme, and what I find wonderful is that there's an incredible willingness to share without agenda.

Anne Bromley is a member of the Entrepreneurs' Forum, a unique group of like-minded people who come together through peer-to-peer mentoring and a series of inspirational events to share best practice, create valuable connections and grow their business.

For more information, visit www.entrepreneursforum.net



A NEW JOB OR NEW PERSPECTIVE FOR THE NEW YEAR?

Bryony Gibson, Managing Director of Bryony Gibson Consulting, talks about New Year's resolutions and how to know when it's the right time to find a new job.

January is the time when, if you're anything like me, you'll be making - or perhaps already breaking - a number of New Year's resolutions.

It's a tradition dating back thousands of years and whether you've decided to start or stop something, the promises you've made to yourself will almost certainly be centred on ways to improve your life, health and happiness.

Work satisfaction plays a big part in how we feel about ourselves, so finding a new job is one of the most common resolutions made in the UK; just behind going to the gym, cutting down on alcohol and losing weight.

Working in the recruitment industry you come to expect the start of each year to be very busy. New staffing budgets are released and job seekers join the market in big numbers following Christmas and annual bonus scheme pay-outs and the holiday period giving people time to consider their future.

It's a hugely competitive month if you're searching for highly-skilled people, which creates a fantastic opportunity for anyone who is at the top of their game and in need of a new challenge. But the market moves fast, so you need to be certain you're ready for change when you start looking for a move.

If I could give one piece of advice to anyone looking for a new job, it would be to make sure that money

is not your main motivator. If you want to be happier at work, before you begin applying for new jobs you need to work out why you really want to make a change.

Without knowing what is making you unhappy, you run the very real risk of swapping one unrewarding job for another.

From an employer's point of view a great member of staff is one who's engaged, ambitious, confident, honest, hard-working, driven, takes responsibility and importantly, fits with the organisational culture.

These are all characteristics that will help you climb the career ladder, so when considering your future, why not start by thinking about whether you meet these traits on a daily basis within your current role; and if the answer is no, maybe it is time to ask yourself a few more searching questions, like:

- How did you find your current job, was it by choice or chance?
- Do you believe in the organisation's vision and mission?
- Do you think the business is heading in the right direction?
- Are your values and beliefs the same as the company's?
- Do you trust and enjoy working with your colleagues?

- Are you regularly learning new skills, gaining experience and being challenged?
- Do you feel valued or taken for granted?
- Are you happy with the amount of money you're making?
- Is there opportunity for career progression in the future?
- Do you envy former colleagues who have gone on to do other things?
- Do you get enough time to spend with your family and friends?
- Is what you're doing moving you closer to your long-term personal goals?
- Do you think you are fulfilling your potential?

It's important to be honest when answering these questions, but to also remember that work will never be as much fun as spending time with your family and friends, so don't be too hard on yourself either.

If this kind of process isn't something you've done before, some of your answers could help you to begin thinking in a different way about why you go to work. If you also take some time to rank your personal motivations alongside what it is that you're passionate about, you should start to really understand what true success looks like for you.

Contact Bryony for career advice and for help finding the right tax & accountancy role or recruits on (0191) 375 9983.

Alternatively, visit www.bryonygibson.com, connect on LinkedIn or follow @bryonygibson.

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Business War Games - Interactive Strategy Dinner

Monday 30th January 2017 from 6.30pm - St Mary's Heritage Centre

There are 6 business critical situations where war-games makes a difference - Learn how to plan and how to test plans, using lessons drawn from military operations. Teams of 10 will be set challenges throughout the evening to deliver a robust plan.

How do your team react under pressure? Is there a natural leader? Who is risk averse? Who do you trust? Who will win?

Quirk Solutions will facilitate the evening led by Chris Paton.

Book tables of 10 at £100 pp +VAT Includes - welcome drink, working supper, war-games interactive strategy training.

Cheltenham Gold Cup Day - Live at Newcastle Racecourse

Friday 17th March 2017 - Gosforth Park Suite

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BANG AND OLUFSEN CINEMA ROOM SHOWCASE & EXCLUSIVE BUSINESS THANK YOU'S!

Exclusive Business CEO, Linda Hitman, welcomed guests to the newly re-furbished show room of Bang & Olufsen Newcastle for a relaxed evening.

Addressing the guests, Linda thanked everyone for their on-going support & participation in Exclusive Business & outlined details of the first event in 2017, Business War Games, an interactive dinner with Christ Paton of Quirk Solutions.

With thanks to Martin Wakefield of Bang & Olufsen Newcastle & Yarm.



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HOME FROM HOME AT EOTHEN

In 2016 Eothen Homes opened a brand new, purpose-built residential home for people living with dementia. Here Ron Ward, whose wife Margaret is a resident there, tells us why the specialist Wallsend development is second to none.

Tell us a little about you and Margaret and why you chose Eothen Homes for her care.

Around seven years ago there was the first evidence Margaret was suffering from Alzheimer's. Her formal diagnosis came in 2012 and after this I became her carer for several years.

In May 2015 Margaret needed a hospital stay. Following this it was clear she required specialist care so I spent time and energy looking for a suitable home.

Unfortunately the home she went into was unable to cope with her various needs. Her lifestyle was very restrictive and her care inconsistent so much so that I used to take her out daily, sometimes all day to keep Margaret active and mentally stimulated.

Thankfully at this time I was introduced to Judy Mattison, the manager at Eothen's Wallsend development, who explained to me about its specialist care facility with its 'butterfly approach'. This means the care workers respond to residents' needs rather than follow a structured regime and it's much more like living at home, just with 24 hour support and company as needed.

Margaret moved in on its opening day and since then, we've never looked back. We have been incredibly pleased with her care.

What makes the actual Wallsend development different in terms of design?

Eothen's Wallsend site is a lovely place to live and spend time. The place has had a huge amount of thought put into it. Margaret is in one of four spacious households each with their own shared kitchen, dining and lounge area, which gives it a warm community feel.

I spend a lot of time there and can easily go for a day and sit myself down in the Atrium with a book. In fact, I often volunteer time in the garden, helping to tend to the plants.

The main thing is the amount of freedom that's afforded to residents. Margaret was a PE teacher and needs mental and physical stimulation. From her room she can access the garden and walk round the expansive grounds in total security. She can also enjoy the Atrium when the weather's poor and the various reminiscence areas and activities that take place.

We also like the fact there is a Chapel on site so if Margaret or I wish to attend a service, we can do without the additional preparation that comes with taking her for a trip out, although we still go out and about, often to St Mary's Lighthouse, very regularly.

What kind of care is provided?

It's possible to see what kind of care is provided from the warm welcome you get by staff on arrival. Margaret is very content and it's not just down to the layout and atmosphere but the attention and time she gets from the team. There's a real family feel and it's very personalised so everyone gets exactly what they need.

I know that if Margaret was ever sat on her own, someone would be across straight away to spend time with her, if that's what she wanted.

It's a very special place and I only wish other homes would mirror their approach to care giving.

What would you say to others about Eothen Homes Wallsend?

When I was first researching residential care homes there were more than 50 on the North Tyneside website and I must have looked at most of them. I didn't come across one designed or run like this by Eothen.

Eothen Homes Wallsend is a completely unique development that is well worth a visit in order to understand what it has to offer, not to mention the actual scale and quality of the home.

If you or someone you love needs a residential care home, I'd definitely recommend taking a look and speaking to the team.

SOMETIMES THINGS JUST DON'T GO TO PLAN...

CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE BUSINESS TRAVELLER



Planning ahead is key to the success of any venture however travel and plans to mitigate disruption are not always taken into consideration and safe, reliable transport can be taken for granted.

I just love it when a plan comes together! The famous words of Hannibal (the A-Team one, not the one that has a penchant for chianti and people) always springs to mind with smug satisfaction when my plan B proves to be successful in preventing circumstances beyond my control fail to prevent me from getting to where I need to be and achieving my objective. This might seem like a rather benign 'win' but when travelling for business time is of the essence and far more is at stake than missing a day by the side of a pool.

Coming from a country where we have fairly reliable transport networks we can be guilty of underestimating the likelihood of disruption to our travel when overseas or even at home. Typically we can expect some disruption due to weather such as the recent disruption to Gatwick due to fog, typically this is usually short lived and the delay can be restricted to only a few hours allowing for a minimal impact on the plans for the day or week. One thing that is particularly difficult to plan around is large scale natural disasters such as the

eruption of the Icelandic volcano Eyjafjallajökull (Pronounced Aya-Fiatla-Yurkult) in 2010. The impact of this eruption to travel was massive, it affected almost every European country causing a total of 107,000 flight cancellations, £1.1 billion in lost revenue and 5 million travellers stranded across the globe. The impact was so severe that HMS Albion was tasked with repatriating UK citizens stuck in Spain!

Whilst this is an extreme and rare event as a regular business traveller we should not underestimate the potential for disruption and the impact it could have. When planning travel it shouldn't be unreasonable to have a primary, secondary and tertiary plan to account for disruption that could impact on business, cutting timings to a tight schedule with no thought given to 'what if?' can only be detrimental in the long run, the smallest deviation or delay will have a much bigger impact on the long term plan.

Taking the time to plan effectively looking at options should the primary method and route fail will pay dividends, having an appropriate

consideration of the transport links between point A and B will allow us to consider how to mitigate problems such as flight cancellations. As part of this planning process assessing overland or sea alternatives combined with an enhanced awareness of local travel protocols, efficiency and availability of modes of transport and emergency accommodation will help take the stress and panic from a deteriorating situation. As a side note consideration should also be given to scams on travellers and where to seek local knowledge for assistance.

This may seem like a cynical and pessimistic approach to travel however the impact of good planning and the knowledge that the 'I's' and 'T's' have been crossed leaves an immeasurable feeling of confidence removing unwarranted stress and allowing the end goal to be completed in a timely fashion with the level of attention and professionalism it deserves. To put it more simplistically 'The Devil is in the detail' allowing us the luxury to take advantage of our foresight by relaxing by the pool in smug satisfaction.



DOBSON AND PARNELL

BY GORDON TAYLOR

One of the advantages of living in the North East is the access to Newcastle and some of the finest eating establishments in the region.

From a business lunch perspective, Dobson and Parnell fill the bill perfectly. A colleague, Colin and I, chose this newly opened restaurant during a busy day and were highly impressed by all aspects of the dining experience.

As soon as you walk in, the restaurant oozes class, the investment in décor and work to create a comfortable ambience, is evident. Natural stonework and sumptuous, dazzling, white tiling, reminiscent of the classic wall coverings many schools had in the 1950's and 60's, greet and impress you with its contrasting imagery. It works superbly well.

Couple that with a mix of contemporary and traditional lighting and the whole interior is light, giving a welcoming feel. It puts you in the right frame of mind for the culinary experience to come.

Investment doesn't end there. The tables and seating are comfortable, well set out, allowing for good elbow room. The dining room is a mix of normal table and seating but also has sections where there are well appointed bench style seats, giving the ability to chat to fellow diners in an intimate atmosphere.

We were greeted by the Manager, Florin, a credit to his profession. Throughout our meal, he was highly attentive, not only to us but all the diners in the restaurant. Clearly the attitude of the staff at Dobson and Parnell is to be unobtrusive, though helpful and on call when you need them. It's something which is difficult to achieve but works so well here.

You'll have gathered the fabric, customer service and general ambience created in the

restaurant could not be faulted. As for the dishes on offer, praise is perhaps not a big enough word for description purposes.

My colleague, Colin, chose from the A La Carte menu, while I plumped for the Daily Set menu offering.

The starter I chose was Line-Caught Mackerel, with Charred alliums, Mackerel Dashi and Allium oil. Much thought had gone into presentation with a sliver of the charred fish dominating the plate and surrounded by the charred alliums along with what seemed a balsamic dressing. As a small side dish, the Dashi arrived containing chopped alliums.

Glancing over at Colin's starter, I was greeted by the sight of a pair of eyes of his Creel Caught Langoustine looking at me directly. The orange colour of the Langoustine in great contrast to the white bowl it arrived in. Accompanied by Saur Kale, Apple Bisque shells. The taste of the Langoustine was extremely delicate and tasty, the thickened apple bisque and Kale giving a slightly tart alternative to the meat.

For mains, my Slow-Roasted Shoulder of Rare Breed Pork, served with Parsnips, Trivet Onions and Pickled Walnuts was superb. It would be nice to know the type of animal it came from but that's a minor point. What is important is that the texture and taste of the meat was so different and superior, I may have to stretch a point in going back to ordinary breed pork. This rare breed animal has a fuller and more intense flavour and was cooked to perfection. It was interesting to taste the meat with a helping of parsnip, the onions and the walnut.

Colin chose another sea dish for his main, in Farmed Halibut on the bone, Salsify, Oxtail and Horseradish. A generous portion of the mild, slightly sweet tasting fish dominated the plate. Over cooking of the fish can be a problem, as it has tendency to dry out but my colleague (a chef himself) assured me the cooking was perfection. I tried some of the Salsify, which almost had an Oyster like taste and that with the Oxtail and a good drizzle of horseradish brought out the taste of the meat wonderfully.

Now we come to the desserts. As someone whose figure is akin to that of Captain Mainwaring of Dad's Army, this is a part of the meal I always enjoy. My Bitter Manjari Chocolate, Candied Clementine, Pistachio Frangipane is certainly not a dish which is designed with losing weight in mind. It arrived well presented, in a train carriage form, blobs of chocolate heading across the plate with sweet clementine and the Pistachio Frangipane punctuating the spaces. The biggest testament I can give this dish is that it took no time at all to demolish. Superb tasting with much thought gone into the alternative tastes.

Bread and Butter pudding was Colin's choice, served with baked custard and a large helping of sloe gin berries on the stalk. He pronounced it superb which I think is all we need to say when a Chef comments so favourably on a dish.

Great praise should be showered on the Chef, Troy Terrington, who clearly has been recruited for his skill, as well as his foresight when creating dishes.

This is one eating establishment that shouldn't be missed.



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HOWZAT FOR CHRISTMAS GIVING!

At the beginning of December the festive season got underway with great entertainment and generous giving. Over 600 guests attended the annual Lords Taverners' Christmas Lunch at Newcastle's Civic Centre, raising almost £40,000 for the sporting charity.

Entertainment on the day came from the 1966 World Cup hat-trick hero, Sir Geoff Hurst who spoke about his days playing top class football, Doddie Weir did a sterling job as master of ceremonies and local impressionists, the Mimic Men, were the supporting act.

Jamie Graham, the regional chair of Lords Taverners' Northumberland Durham, thanked everyone for their generosity and continued support of the charity, which gives young people a sporting chance.





GETTING YOUR BUSINESS 'INVESTMENT READY'

BY MICHAEL CANTWELL, HEAD OF CORPORATE FINANCE AT RMT ACCOUNTANTS & BUSINESS ADVISORS



The end of one year and start of a new one often provides company management teams with a small window of opportunity to step back from the day-to-day commercial whirl and survey how the land lies.

For some, it may be a case of "if it ain't broke, don't fix it," but for others, 2017 could be the year where they decide to make a step change in their firm's operations, whether through investing in new equipment, enhancing the range of products or services that they supply or targeting new markets at home and/or overseas.

The likelihood is that any such evolution is going to require a significant cash investment, and unless the company is lucky enough to either have the money in the bank or some major backers already on board, it is going to have to seek this money from elsewhere.

Growing North East businesses are in a better position than many of their peers around the UK when it comes to accessing investment capital, thanks to the Finance For Business North East Programme.

Over the last six years, around £160m has been available through a suite of different funds to help regional businesses create new jobs and wealth - and with the second round of the programme set to offer another very substantial amount of money when it launches in the first quarter of 2017, there's a continuing opportunity for North East firms to access invaluable development capital.

So if you're thinking about taking your business down this road, what do you need to get it 'investment ready' and to make yourself as attractive an investment proposition as possible?

The people that make your business are often the first things to be considered, which means both the management team that will be driving the implementation of the business plan in which you're looking for an investment, as well as the workforce that will deliver it on a day-to-day basis.

Do they have the collective credibility, knowledge, skills and determination to turn what's on paper into something more tangible, exactly how will they be doing this, how will venture capital involvement make success more likely and are there any gaps that you should be looking to fill?

A management team's track record also plays a big part in weighing up the likelihood of success. Can you show that your people and/or your business have achieved their commercial objectives in the past, that this experience is going to be used to make similar success more likely in your next venture and that you're in the right shape to make this realistic?

The strength and extent of the competition you're facing also makes a big difference - if you're going

up against a well-established or highly-regarded rival, for example, how are you going to compete successfully with them, and what makes you stand out from the rest?

Of course, you can do all the preparation in the world and still get things wrong on the day, as the many companies that have gone away empty-handed from the Dragons' Den that have then gone on to do well regardless clearly show.

However, experience tells us that the more detailed planning, preparation and research you do, and the more expert support you have in developing, refining and delivering your investment case, the more likely you are to succeed.

It seems clear to me that, even accounting for the economic uncertainties that surround us, with the range of funding solutions available, the present remains a good time for North East businesses to secure outside investment.

RMT provides the full range of financial and business advisory services through its accountancy, corporate finance, specialist tax, healthcare, information technology and recovery & insolvency teams, and works with firms of all sizes both within and outside the North East.

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AND THEN THERE WERE THREE...

2015 was a monumental year for Leathers LLP; celebrating 25 years in business, Managing Partner Michael Leather, together with members of his team at various stages along the way, completed the gruelling 3344km Tour de Force bike ride along the 2015 Tour de France route, raising over £40,000 in aid of the William Wates Memorial Trust.

A once in a lifetime achievement? Far from it. Team Leathers are back in the saddle and looking towards July 2017...

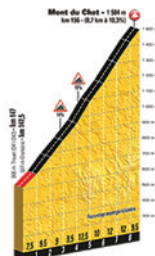


Wednesday 20th July 2016

Chris Froome leads the 2016 Tour de France into the Swiss Alps, with the climax in Paris looming. The 2016 edition of the Tour de Force finished a few days earlier.

Such is the demand and desire to take part in next year's Tour de Force, places for the 2017 event are made available almost a full year in advance. Places go live at 9am.

At 9.01am, Michael Leather, not knowing any details other than the event starts in Dusseldorf on 24th June 2016, signs up for the full 2017 route as a 'lifer'...



18th October 2016

The months of speculation are over and the route of the 2017 Tour de France is unveiled to the world. Michael, however, has yet to recruit any teammates for the 2017 challenge.

Unfortunately, the 2017 route provides Michael with little assistance in his recruitment drive.

More climbing than in previous years, visiting each of France's five mountain ranges, climbs with gradients hitting eye-watering 20%, it's enough to deter even professional cyclists!

Whilst Michael has signed up for the full 3500km route, the Tour de Force also offers shorter 'Tour Tasters', ranging between two and nine stages. It is these Tour Tasters which hold the key to the formation of Team Leathers 2017...

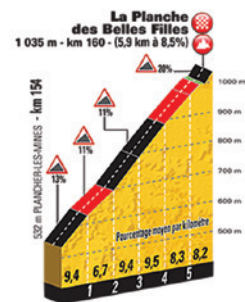


26th October 2016

The 2017 Tour Tasters are released and Michael remains the only participant from Team Leathers... yet, two brave souls show a glimmer of interest.

After much deliberation, and some assertive words of encouragement from Michael, Neil Matthews and Barry James (veterans of the 2015 edition) sign up for three stages, starting in the Pyrenees and finishing in the Massif Central. Apparently the breath-taking scenery is enough to mask the pain in the legs on the climbs.

The sheer physical and mental challenge



which awaits the team in July 2017 can't be underestimated; each participant knows what it takes to complete their respective stages, only this time they want to enjoy it rather than just survive! So, as we enter December's festive season, the three remaining members of Team Leathers are ditching the mince pies and Christmas jumpers for sessions on the turbo trainer and rides in their winter lycra. Hopefully it'll all be worth it come the summer.

Once again, Team Leathers will be raising as much money as possible for the amazing William Wates Memorial Trust, helping under privileged children in local communities. Interest is already gathering pace for a follow up charity dinner, so look out for updates in the New Year!

leathers LLP



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IN CONVERSATION WITH:
Suzanne McArdle

SENIOR TAX MANAGER, UNW LLP

Suzanne McArdle joined UNW as Senior Tax Manager in September 2016 and helps corporate clients manage their tax reporting and compliance whilst also providing advice on a range of tax matters. A keen cyclist, Suzanne recently returned from a 350-mile trip in the Middle East.

Can you tell us about the cycling trip you've recently been on?

I've recently returned from a week-long trip to Jordan in the Middle East, where I was part of a group of 8 who cycled 350 miles from Amman to Aqaba. The journey was the length of the country and involved 6 days of riding, with one rest day where we visited the lost city of Petra. I use the term 'rest day' rather loosely, as we still managed to walk over 10 miles!

You must have seen some extraordinary sights, what was your highlight of Jordan?

It's very hard to choose a favourite. Petra was amazing, but we also travelled along The King's Highway via castles and canyons which was very picturesque, and managed to get some well-earned relaxation floating in The Dead Sea.

The trip ended at The Red Sea, and by then I'd taken in two UNESCO world heritage sites and numerous famous landmarks. It made all the physical toil I had to endure completely worth it.

How was the cycling element of the trip?

Tough, and a lot more challenging than I expected. It wasn't so much the distance, but the immensely hilly terrain we encountered along the way, in addition to some busy stretches of motorway and packs of wild dogs! However, I'm extremely pleased I managed to cycle the whole way, as I had a rather nasty accident a few weeks prior, so it was a miracle I even made the trip at all!

Can you tell us a little more about the accident?

It happened when I was on a 100-mile ride with a group of 14 friends, around 16 miles in. One of the guys in front of me skidded on diesel, I couldn't get out of the way in time and went down with him. I definitely came off second best, but luckily my bike didn't sustain the damage I did. A trip to the hospital and numerous x-rays later, no broken bones were found, but I had to take a week and a half off work. The timing couldn't have been worse, as I had only been in my new job at UNW for around a month!

You recently joined UNW as Senior Tax Manager, how have you settled in? And how did the opportunity arise?

I've settled in well, and everyone has been extremely welcoming and friendly. It's especially great to be part of a team again with plenty of opportunity to

get out and meet clients. I'd spent the last 4 years as Head of Tax at Gentoo, one of the region's largest housing associations, but was keen to return to accounting practice. I was already aware of UNW's superb reputation in the marketplace, and once I had learnt more about the firm and met the people involved, the decision to join became a very easy one for me to make.

What does your new role entail?

During the initial conversations I had with UNW, one thing that particularly enticed me was the variation the role would bring. Tailored to suit my previous experience, I have been brought in to advise our corporate clients and help them manage their tax reporting and compliance, all whilst making the process as efficient and painless as possible. I get extreme satisfaction from my current role: I'm not at my desk 9 to 5, I am out in the marketplace, building relationships and working closely with the wide range and ever increasing number of clients UNW has.

You previously mentioned you were Head of Tax at Gentoo, could you expand a little further on your career background?

Despite gaining a Master's Degree in Chemistry from Durham University, I decided to enter the world of finance, as it offered good career opportunities and professional qualifications. I like working with people, so having clients appealed to me, and I've surprisingly transferred a lot of skills from chemistry to my tax career. I previously spent 11 years at KPMG, where I qualified as a Chartered Tax Advisor and progressed to Senior Manager, so I arrived at UNW with vast experience of working in both industry and accounting practice. This will prove invaluable to me going forward.

What does the next 12 months' look like for you, both personally and with UNW?

In both instances, extremely busy! I have joined one of the largest specialist tax teams in the region, so we have a huge variety of projects to work on as we look to further enhance our reputation in the marketplace.

From a personal perspective, my trip to Jordan was just the start. I already have further trips booked that will see me cycle in Gran Canaria, Majorca, the Scottish coast and Arran, building up to a very hilly 631-mile cycle through the Massif Central in France next summer. It will be a huge challenge, but one I'm really looking forward to, just so long as I stay injury-free!

DIGITAL AND PR AGENCY CONTINUES TO GROW WITH NEW FINANCIAL COLLABORATION



L-R: Amy Holland, Mark Hetherington and Adam Turner of UNW with Raman Sehgal.

ramarketing, a Newcastle-based creative, digital and PR agency, which was recently named 'Outstanding PR Consultancy of the year' at the CIPR PRide North East Awards, has embarked on a new financial collaboration to support its successful export growth strategy.

Founded in 2009 by Raman Sehgal, the company specialises in marketing solutions for B2B companies, with the manufacturing and pharmaceutical sectors proving particularly fruitful for ramarketing since its inception.

Firmly established in the UK, ramarketing set its sights on moving into the international market, winning clients across Europe and now in the US. This has been reflected in the company's organic growth, which has increased year on year at an increasingly rapid rate since 2013.

UNW is working with ramarketing on all financial aspects of the business, guiding the team in the next stage of the agency's development.

Raman Sehgal said: "We moved into our city centre premises a few years ago, and since then we have grown at an extremely fast pace. In late 2015, it became clear that the time was right to find a new

accountancy firm to provide more proactive advice beyond the basics. I approached UNW after they were recommended to me by a mutual contact.

"In moving some of our target markets outside of the UK as part of our growth strategy, UNW's support and advice regarding foreign billing and currency has been invaluable.

"UNW also identified at an early stage in our discussions that some of the accounting processes we had in place were not suitable for our future needs. In doing so, they have allowed us to nip potential future issues in the bud at an early stage while giving us a more stable foundation for future growth."

Despite Raman's initial vision of creating a small consultancy that focussed solely on PR and SEO, ramarketing now provides a large scope of marketing and business developmental services,

with varying degrees of input. It remains, however, fully committed to its North-East roots, with a regular local talent recruitment drive as its employee list grows.

UNW has helped roll-out Xero, a cloud-based accountancy tool, to the wider ramarketing commercial function, ensuring members of the team are now involved in all financial aspects of the business. Expert help and advice regarding tax and payroll is also a major part of the arrangement.

Mark Hetherington, VAT Partner at UNW, said: "The foundation of ramarketing's success can be attributed to their client-focussed approach.

"This sentiment is something we share at UNW, and we are delighted to play a part in their future ambitions."



NBS CELEBRATE £5.8M RENOVATION

NBS recently celebrated the £5.8m renovation of their offices, the Grade II listed Old Post Office on St Nicholas Street, in Newcastle.

NBS, which provides construction knowledge tools and services to construction industry professionals, welcomed a couple who met at the Old Post Office party more than 74 years ago.

Having been married for 68 years, Elsie and Alan Vardy, both 90, returned to their former workplace as VIP guests, to cut the cake and look around the exhibition, where old photographs and mementos of the building are now displayed.

Along with office space for NBS, the revamp has included the creation of a lecture theatre, event spaces and a gym.

For further information about NBS, which provides technical information, products and services to UK architecture, construction, design and engineering companies, visit www.thenbs.com



MAKING TAX DIFFICULT

One of previous Chancellor George Osborne's grand claims was that he was abolishing the annual tax return. This sent shivers down the spines of members of my Private Client Team who immediately started making plans for a career change, but their worries were premature. The annual tax return is being replaced by a digital account which still requires an 'annual declaration' (Tax Return anyone?).



Stuart McKinnon

Although the digital account will be pre-populated with what HMRC already knows, having received it from third parties, you will still need to check this information is correct and also enter what HMRC doesn't know. This could be business profits income from let property dividends and capital gains i.e. those things which tend to make a tax return necessary in any event!

This is all part of a project which HMRC has entitled 'Making Tax Digital (MTD)'. What you have to bear in mind here is that HMRC is currently anything but digital. It must be one of the very few organisations where it is still not possible as a matter of routine to communicate with their officers via email. Therefore it is significantly behind the curve and is trying to catch up very quickly. Security is blamed for the years of procrastination but surely Government Departments such as Defence with all its resources must be one of the most secure organisations in the country, so why couldn't HMRC piggy back that? Unless, of course there, is something we are not being told!

The danger is that in trying to catch up HMRC moves too quickly and the system just doesn't work or becomes cumbersome, unwieldy and time consuming for the average taxpayer to comply with it. An example of this will be the need for businesses to submit a copy of their accounting records via their digital account on a quarterly basis. All but the very smallest of businesses will have to comply with this and face heavy penalties for failure to do so. Now you may say many businesses have an obligation for quarterly reporting anyway as they complete VAT returns and monthly reporting of PAYE liabilities. However, the difference is twofold. Firstly, you can still keep manual records if you wish and both returns are required as there is a need to pay tax at the end of the quarter or month. With MTD there is no manual option (everyone must keep digital records) and there is no immediate tax charge; payment dates remain as before.

As these quarterly submissions are not going to be used to assess a tax liability (for now at least) you do wonder what HMRC is going to do with the information. As accountants we take our clients'

information (be it manual or digital) and produce a set of financial statements from it. We sense check it, correcting errors if necessary, and then adjust the accounts to produce a tax computation reflecting the differences between accounting and taxable profit. It is unlikely, therefore, that what HMRC will see on a quarterly basis will be what the client will declare as their taxable profit. This is not through any dishonesty, but simply as a result of an overly complex tax system.

I was talking to a friend recently regarding her Tax Return. She keeps perfectly good manual records but feels under immense pressure at the time of Tax Return filing. Not only does she have to run her very busy and successful business during the day but has to deal with her filing obligations in the evening. When I explained about the proposed new system she saw a positive in being able to account in bite sized chunks but was less happy about being forced to account digitally and with the potential increase in the number of sleepless nights!

For more information on corporate tax or other taxation issues, please contact Stuart McKinnon on 0191 255 7000 or email stuart.mckinnon@rsmuk.com or your usual RSM contact.

INVESTING IN INSIGHT, SUPPORTING SMES



The North East is a unique and distinctive region. As such, its businesses require and deserve tailored support, which is something that Leigh Taylor, Regional Director for the North East at Lloyds Bank Commercial Banking, understands all too well.

Alongside his team of locally-based advisors, he has worked hard to enhance the bank's expertise in business sectors with a strong foothold in the region, from agriculture to advanced manufacturing.

Leigh said: "It's crucial that our relationship managers are properly equipped to serve the industries that make the North East so special. So we ensure our team's breadth of expertise covers the issues and operational nuances of every sector in the region.

"An understanding of production techniques in an engineering business, or the working day of a farmer, is vital when offering relevant recommendations for future financing arrangements, or even just to talk on a level playing field about their business."

Five alive

The bank has developed five key specialisms, which were chosen to provide the best possible service to north east SMEs: agriculture, manufacturing, real estate, health and education.

Ultimately, all of Lloyds' relationship managers will become fully trained and accredited specialists, enabling them to provide informed advice and

support to their chosen sector.

And that support goes way beyond traditional day-to-day banking services.

It could include using Six Sigma analysis techniques to boost quality at a manufacturing business, applying lean management methods to achieve long-term efficiencies, advising local farmers on future land acquisitions or understanding rules and regulations of how a care home operates.

Informed advice

Lloyds' aim is that a relationship manager will always be on hand to provide informed advice on the sector specific issues that are so important to our customers.

The ambition is to add value for every client in every interaction it has, with the ultimate aim of helping every customer, and the region, achieve its full potential.

That's why Lloyds is investing so heavily in training, both financially and from a time perspective, and partnering with relevant bodies so our colleagues can earn proper accreditation.

All relationship managers must attend 40 hours

of professional training every year to ensure their insight is up-to-date.

Leigh said: "We've gone out of our way to differentiate ourselves from other banks, so that our colleagues can support their customers with full knowledge of the issues that are important to them.

"We can sit down and provide informed, timely insight into the issues they need to be aware of, whether they be growth opportunities or potential headwinds.

"That's how we add value to our relationships and go above and beyond the typical bank/customer relationship."

Over the last few years, Lloyds has recruited an exceptional senior management team for the North East.

Most of them are born and bred in the region and Leigh emphasises that they take great pride in their SME customers' achievements.

The current focus on further strengthening Lloyds' support for North East SMEs is testament to the bank's determination help write the region's success story.

ACCOUNTANTS GROWTH ADDS UP TO SUCCESS

When Jane Freeman and Derrick Hutchinson met as young accountancy apprentices neither would've thought they'd one day run their own practice...

They started their careers as apprentices at the same firm, and 20 years later Jane Freeman and Derrick Hutchinson are now the owners of a successful accountancy company.

It was back in the late 1990s when the pair began modern apprenticeships at a Newcastle firm, and neither imagined that two decades later they would be business partners.

"Jane and I met as apprentices and our careers were running in a similar direction at the time," explained Derrick.

"It's interesting because we had both opted for the modern apprentice route into the industry as opposed to the traditional degree method but I think it was the perfect choice for us both."

The pair worked alongside each other for several years until they were both fully qualified accountants, and shortly after decided the next step would be opening their own firm.

In 2009 they made the move, opening their first office in Seghill. A second office in Blyth followed as they built the business up from scratch.

"We'd known each other a long time through work and we both wanted the same thing, so setting up together seemed the perfect idea," said Jane.

"It's been hard work but Derrick has always been as committed as I am to making this a success, and we both put everything we had into getting it off the ground."

In 2014 they acquired Torbitt & Co and renamed the firm JFS Torbitt, and since then business has really taken off.

They now employ 14 members of staff and have a client base of more than 1000.

Such has been the firm's growth that it has recently upgraded to bigger premises in Birtley.

JFS Torbitt now occupies the former Barclays Bank site on Durham Road, and has already seen even more interest since the move.

"We had definitely outgrown the old office and needed more space but we hadn't actually banked on the fact that we'd end up getting more clients just on the back of being in a new building," said Jane.

"Because of its prime spot, we are picking up a lot of passing traffic with businesses and individuals coming in and asking about our services."

Both Derrick and Jane admit they're happy with how well the business is going, and pride themselves on being able to draw on their own



experiences to enhance the service to their clients.

"We have both run other businesses in the past and I think this is something clients warm to because they know we understand what challenges they may be facing.

"Both Jane and I feel the personal touch is important and we like to give our clients expert accountancy and tax efficient advice while empathising with their business needs.

"There are times when we both take a step back and think about how we've grown so much, particularly over the last two or three years and we are both proud of how we've come from a relatively humble start to be where we are now."

For further information about JFS Torbitt, visit the website: www.jfstorbitt.co.uk

KPSpotlight ON – ALEX HUDSON

As jobs go, barrister and accountant are two pretty good ones if we do say so ourselves. But where is the link between standing in court and managing accounts? Enter Alex Hudson.

Alex, KP Simpson Certified Public Accountants' Office Manager and member of the team for almost five years, started off his working life wanting to be a barrister, studying law and gaining the highest marks in his field. However, as he explains, it wasn't as easy as it seemed to get into the profession.

"I wanted to be a barrister hence the law studies however it was all very political and with my family being very working class I didn't really fit in. Even though I was top of my class in all academic studies of law I could not gain a sponsorship as none of my family were from a law background."

Fortunately for Alex, his strong mathematics skills came in more than a little handy as he found work in accountancy - funnily enough with KP Simpson's own Andrew Potts, albeit for a different firm - before leaving to progress his qualifications.

The hard work and studying paid off for Alex though and he soon got a job running an accountancy firm in Sunderland. It was something he enjoyed for six years, before old friend Andrew came knocking with an opportunity at his new firm, KP Simpson.

Initially starting off part-time with KP Simpson, this quickly became a full-time role and a position as office manager he still holds today.

Although not part of his job role, Alex wants to help change the way accounts are seen.

"We've got a young, vibrant workforce who aren't scared to get involved in all areas of the business and think outside the box.

"Rather than the old fashioned vision of a grey, dour accountant with pipe in hand who you'd see once a year, we like to keep regular contact with clients so they know exactly where they stand."

Creative, efficient and friendly – Alex's words not ours – KP Simpson really are changing the accounting and tax game, challenging perceptions and doing the best for clients on a case by case basis.



If you need any advice, or want to know more about KP Simpson and their services, visit www.kpsimpson.co.uk, call on 0191 420 0550 or drop an email to info@kpsimpson.co.uk

NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS - GET FINANCIALLY FIT

Over-indulgence at Christmas has got a lot to answer for, from the few extra pounds you find on the scales, to the lack of pounds in your wallet come January.

Many of us make New Year's resolutions to get ourselves back into shape after the festive season, so this year, why not use yours to help yourself get financially fit?

There are lots of small things you can do to get financially ready for the year ahead. For example, if you have any life insurance policies, updating your policy details can often considerably lower your premiums. For instance, if you have quit smoking, you could save money on your monthly payments.

In similar fashion, if your family or financial circumstances have changed since you last made a Will, then I would recommend arranging to speak to a solicitor to get this updated to reflect your new or changed circumstances.

Another good way to save money is by reviewing your energy tariffs. There are several good price comparison websites available to do this and it's surprisingly easy to change to another supplier if you find a better deal.

If you have managed to max-out your credit card this Christmas, you will be paying a very high rate of interest on the balance. I would recommend converting this to a personal loan where the interest rate will be much lower. When choosing a lender however, always be careful to select one where you can make voluntary over payments and pay back the loan early without any penalty charges.

In the spirit of 'new year, new you,' many people may be thinking about retirement or maybe working less hours. If you would like to look at the feasibility of your plans, then Explore Wealth Management has a tried and tested Cashflow Planning system that can help you plan for the future.



Stephen Sumner

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OAKVIEW HOUSE, NETHERTON MOOR FARM, HARTFORD BRIDGE



PRICE GUIDE: £725,000

Oakview House, part of a small development of rural farm buildings close to the hamlet of Hartford Bridge, provides an outstanding country home. This deceptively spacious property has lovely interior design with quality woodwork and beautiful flooring, and enjoys a stunning position with outstanding views over the magnificent surrounding Northumbrian countryside. The house itself has been considerably remodelled in recent years and offers extensive accommodation which includes four double bedrooms, a large family kitchen/breakfasting room, a family room, a formal sitting room and a leisure suite which was previously two bedrooms and now provides a professional study/working office and a snug/TV den. Externally, the gardens are impressive with lawned areas, well stocked borders, and a decked area with 6 person hot tub, a great place to relax and enjoy the evening sunset.



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The Village is the latest phase to be released at this established development of new homes set in a stunning woodland setting.

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Pine House Park Drive, Hepscott Park, Stannington

🔑 9 🚗 4 🛖 7

This outstanding detached luxury home is set in mature grounds of 1.149 acres with lovely views over surrounding countryside. It has been extensively remodelled to create a fabulous, family house with very impressive features including a leisure suite with hydrotherapy pool.



Price Guide £1.95 Million

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Ashleigh Sundin
ashleigh.sundin@sandersonyoung.co.uk

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www.sandersonyoung.co.uk





Weldon Mill Weldon, Longframlington

6 5 4 E

A magnificent 19th Century water mill conversion within 9 acres of grounds and paddock land on the banks of the River Coquet. This stunning family home retains original charm and character and also benefits from an indoor swimming pool, stabling and fishing rights.



Price Guide: £1.25 Million

rare! From Sanderson Young

Ashleigh Sundin
ashleigh.sundin@sandersonyoung.co.uk
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NEW YEAR, NEW HOME

New Year, new start, new house? Whether you're a first time buyer or looking for your retirement property, we've got it covered...

It's the same every January. We make New Year's resolutions and start out with the best of intentions.

Sometimes those resolutions fall by the wayside, but if one of those promises was to buy a new home then the great news is that it is definitely the one that you can follow through!

If you are really serious about a new start then why not put that plan into action as soon as 2017 begins?

. Some sellers put their home on the market as soon as the Christmas rush is over, and buyers could find they are the first to see new properties as they hit the market.

The type of home you're looking for will always depend on where it is you want to live and of course, what stage you're at in life.

For a first time buyer, it's about taking that first step onto the property ladder with as little stress as possible, and investing your cash into a new build property is generally the best way to start.

There won't be any nasties like damp or dry rot to catch you out a few weeks in, and you've got peace of mind that everything is fabulous and new.

A new development can be the perfect place to buy your first home as you'll become part of a new community where everyone is in the same boat, with many modern developments now drawing on community interaction more and more.

The Malings in Ouseburn, Newcastle, is an award-winning development offering a contemporary twist on the traditional Tyneside flat with community values at its heart thanks to communal herb gardens, bike parks and car parks.

If it sounds like paradise then that's because it is – but be quick because there really is only a handful of these fabulous homes left.

For a more traditional style of living, new estates like Chapter Homes' Eden Field development in Newton Aycliffe are perfect.

With a selection of two, three and four bedroom homes, these estates enjoy a nice mix of people at various stages of life and many first time buyers often move up to bigger properties nearby because they have become a part of this community.

For those with a family, a new home needs to be big enough to grow into. Again there is no shortage of new and old homes available across the region.

If you're in the market for something really special, you can find some of the best homes in the country here in the North East.

Luxury is within easy reach and priced at less than £700,000 at Elmfield Court, Gosforth, Newcastle, or why not steep yourself in history with a detached house in Durham City from £750,000?

And when it's time to take things a bit easier as retirement approaches, why not enjoy the best of coast and countryside with a barn conversion?

I adore the Cresswell Home Farm barn conversions in Northumberland where you can pick up a gorgeous grade II listed conversion from £170,000.

With plenty of choices regardless of whether it's city or country that's best for you, let 2017 be the year that really gets you on the move!

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NEW YEAR; NEW BEGINNINGS. OR WILL IT BE THE SMALLER CHANGES THAT WILL BRING THE BIGGEST RESULTS?



Will it be doom and gloom, or will the New Year headlines be full of high notes and ongoing celebrations in the construction sector?

Writing this in December, our thoughts are on what the next few weeks requires of us ahead of the Christmas shut-down. But we are also turning our minds to the seemingly 'distant' deadlines the new year will bring, and the knowledge that in a matter of days we will be in 2017, with new beginnings planned and New Year's Resolutions asserted.

We will also, at various points between the beginning of January and the end of March find out from the Office of National Statistics, and media outlets including the BBC, *Building* magazine and *Construction News*, via a few well-placed and well-versed commentators, what construction activity looked like at the latter end of 2016. Our printed media and e-news sources will bombard us with the wit and wisdom of economic and commercial analysts keen to impart their interpretation of the statistics, and it will certainly be interesting to see if earlier predictions are spot on or a world away from the true picture.

But let's look at what we know now. Saturday 31 December bade farewell to 2016. The world kept turning, and the sites we abandoned for Christmas are still waiting for the construction teams to return. Planning committee meetings - which will

hopefully result in Approval decisions, rather than delay development proposals while appeals are lodged - are imminent, and we are back to those pesky tender documents sitting on our desks with the clock ever-so-annoyingly ticking down to that deadline, now a couple of weeks nearer.

2017. New Year; New Beginning.

Well, not quite. Here at Results Communications, it will be business as usual, with our commitment to doing what we say we will, when we will, and - where we can - exceed expectations. But we are conscious that we are at the start of a new year, and that the possibilities of what the next 12 months will bring are endless.

A new year doesn't necessarily mean you need to make a new start, or create new beginnings. The smallest of tweaks can bring about the biggest changes and impact in a business. Why not try doing something differently? Or at a different time? How about giving someone else in the business a chance to step up and show what they are capable of?

Some of our clients have already started preparing for the changes they will be making in the New Year; developing their marketing strategy ahead of

time so they are not on the back foot; anticipating the work required in a stakeholder engagement campaign as we approach the planning committee meeting when our project is likely to be the main (if not only) discussion point. Others are planning the growth of their businesses, exploring recruitment, internal development and expansion, getting their ducks in a row, and talking about how that looks from a marketing and engagement perspective.

We've been making our own preparations; while working client-side we'll be implementing a few 'refreshes' internally, implementation of the business development strategy for the next 12 months and - hopefully - welcoming another new face to the business. Either way, we'll be wishing everyone a happy and prosperous year.

Results Communications delivers bespoke and strategic marketing, stakeholder engagement and bid writing solutions to public and private sector clients regionally and nationally. By doing this, we can help smooth the path through the planning process by integrating those affected by infrastructure projects, remove the conflict from construction, and help access contracts and funding.

BUSINESS MILESTONE FOR FINANCIAL SERVICES

BH Financial Services, launched by leading North East commercial and residential property specialist Bradley Hall, is celebrating its first anniversary. BH Group Managing Director Neil Hart discusses this first year.



When launching BH Financial Services at the start of 2016, we knew there was an appetite for a professional finance broker, however we didn't anticipate how well the first year of business would go. Many Bradley Hall clients want a one-stop-shop service, whether that's helping source a really competitive mortgage on a home or a commercial loan or a better deal on their motor finance.

During 2016 BH Financial Services, which is part of the BH Group, exceeded its initial performance targets, restructured to accommodate customer demand, relocated and created jobs.

The company is ending its first operating year by completing its largest ever deal – a multi-million financial package, providing commercial funding for a client to allow a property acquisition in London.

It's a great way to end what has been a very strong year. Clients have responded positively to our range of services and recognise the value and expertise we can bring to deals. We can provide a comprehensive service to business people and investors, including

financial advice on commercial and residential mortgages, cars and a variety of business essentials such as IT and telecoms.

The team is led by financial specialist James Hill who has raised funding for a wide range of business needs from IT infrastructure, telecom systems, plant and machinery along to cars and vans.

Earlier this year there was also a slight restructure when BH Mortgage Services was established to provide a bespoke residential mortgage brokerage service, headed by experienced mortgage specialist Lewis Chambers.

This comprehensive range of financial services, approved and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA), is available through the network of Bradley Hall estate agency offices – in Gosforth, Newcastle; Durham; Morpeth and Alnwick.

Due to demand in its services, BH Financial Services recently expanded its team by employing Oliver Lavin, formerly of Tesco Bank and Northern Rock, who recently joined the firm as a mortgage adviser. Oliver is based in the new head office of BH Group,

in One Hood Street, Newcastle.

A further recruit includes Louis Jackson, 18, a business administration apprentice from Newcastle College.

We believe that one of the key drivers of growth in the residential mortgage market is the fact BH Mortgage Services charges no fees to arrange a mortgage. Most other mortgage brokers take both a fee and a commission from the lender.

To maintain and accelerate growth we also recognise that BH Financial Services has to win work independent of the group. Our growing reputation and ability to compete so aggressively should be a winning combination for many people on the coming year.

Following this first year milestone we are looking forward to what 2017 will bring for BH Financial Services. James and the team have performed extremely well and above expectations, and we are excited to see what the new members of the team can contribute.



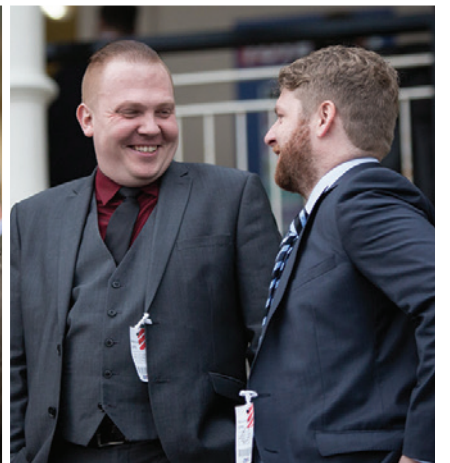
BRADLEY HALL AND MHW FESTIVE RACE MEET

To celebrate the end of a fantastic year for Bradley Hall, the leading North East independent property agent hosted a Festive Race Meet at Newcastle Racecourse in December – in association with MHW PR.

Almost 300 clients, professional partners, friends and staff enjoyed a festive feast and drinks at the floodlit racing meet.

The event was also used as an occasion to highlight and celebrate the valuable work of the Heel and Toe Children's Charity. Several thousands of pounds were raised for the charity which provides free therapy and support to North East children with physical disabilities.





GET AHEAD OF THE GAME TO SECURE YOUR DREAM HOME AT LUXURY NUNTHORPE DEVELOPMENT

Five star housebuilder, David Wilson Homes North East, is encouraging homebuyers to act now in order to secure their new home at its popular Grey Towers Village development on Dixons Bank, Nunthorpe. The next phase of homes is due to launch this year and buyers can take advantage of David Wilson Homes' innovative Part Exchange scheme.

Homes currently available to buy at Grey Towers Village include the Tunstall, a beautiful four-bedroom family property with ample living space, priced from £454,995. The ground floor features a lounge and spacious kitchen, both of which are light and airy, which creates a sense of outdoor living with large French doors opening out on to the rear garden. There is also a separate dining room and study, providing breakout space for the whole family. The first floor plays host to four large bedrooms, with the dual-aspect master suite having its own en suite.

Another of the luxury homes available at Grey Towers Village is the Lichfield, a detached family home set across three floors, boasting an impressive entrance hall and a triple detached garage. Beyond the entrance hall, this home features a comfortable lounge, dining room, study and kitchen with breakfast and utility areas, which opens out to the garden. The master bedroom with a dressing area and en suite is found on the first floor, alongside two spacious double bedrooms and the family bathroom. To the second floor there are two further bedrooms with an additional dual-access bathroom. The Lichfield is available to buy from £579,995.

Buyers looking for their dream home at Grey Towers Village can capitalise on the Part Exchange scheme offered by David Wilson Homes, which makes the moving process much more efficient. The scheme allows homebuyers to sell their existing property to the housebuilder in order to move into their new house, which alleviates any estate agent fees and means there is no chain.



Steven Ball, Sales Manager at Grey Towers Village, commented: "We've seen high demand for homes here at Grey Towers Village and we're anticipating similar demand for the next phase of homes launching early next year. For those looking to move in the New Year, I would recommend acting now to secure a home and avoid missing out. Our expert Sales Advisers are on hand at the site to discuss any requirements and the buying options."

Based on Dixons Bank in Nunthorpe, Grey Towers Village is a stunning development offering a range of traditional three, four and five bedroom homes in a range of designs. Overlooked by Roseberry Topping and the Cleveland Hills, this development effortlessly combines village life with the convenience of modern living, benefitting from a range of amenities on its doorstep.

To find out more about Grey Towers Village or to book an appointment, please visit: www.dwh.co.uk

TRUST IS KEY IN LETTING GAME...



Trust – it may only be five little letters, but it's one of the biggest words in the English language, one on which businesses reputations often hang, and the property rental industry is no different.

In November 2016, Students in Bristol took to protesting about the condition of their rooms, with alleged negligence for communication with the students around issues with general living conditions. Protests followed after the company refused to sign an ethical lettings charter proposed by students.

Providing a level of trust between a landlord and tenants is important to ensuring everyone is happy with the service they are receiving.

Approaching both students and landlords fairly and with respect is a key ethos to the way Morgan Douglas works as a service. The level of service offered at Morgan Douglas is important, the limitless hands-on approach means the company can be contacted at any time therefore providing unique service to all tenants.

Investing time in to both the client and the tenant allows for reduction in hassle during the switch over. Keeping everyone happy

whilst finding a tenant an ideal landlord is important. Within testimonials, tenants have said "The team were quick & efficient at finding us a very comfortable property in a good central location, we had a couple of viewings with properties within their portfolio and were treated very well. The best news is that the property chosen was under our budget".

On the other hand, landlords in which Morgan Douglas have had the pleasure of dealing with before have previously mentioned:

"Morgan Douglas listed the house on their website for rent and quickly found us some brilliant students who to date, have been model tenants".

Another landlord also explained: "Morgan Douglas have made letting out our central Durham property a breeze. We have a great set of students in the house which treat the property with respect and are always punctual with payments".

If you are a student moving to Durham or if you are looking for next year's accommodation, you can get in touch with Morgan Douglas on 0191 389 8630 or email on hello@morgandouglas.co.uk.

For more information on properties or becoming a landlord you can visit online at www.morgandouglas.co.uk

NEWS FROM HEATON PROPERTY



Damiano Rea, Director, Heaton Property

Christmas last year was a real Italian Christmas. This involved the annual trip to my parents home, Arpino in the Lazio region of Italy where 253 families share my surname. Uncle Fabio runs La Dispensa, a big delicatessen packed with delicious wonders to fill our car for the journey home. Arpino is also the birthplace of the Roman philosopher Cicero. History is silent on his surname but I am sure it must have been Rea.

Back home we enjoyed Christmas around the table; eating, drinking, catching up with family and friends. Then there were the few days between Christmas and New Year where nothing much happens. I used the time to call our landlords for a chat while things are quiet.

The result was alarming. Some of our landlords described 2016 as 'annus horribilis' citing the 3% Stamp Duty for investors, proposed Client Money Protection legislation, removal of mortgage tax relief and the Renters rights Bill. Other landlords asked "What do we do about this swathe of legislation in the rental sector?"

My answer was simple. "We have done it". Hopefully this will have calmed our landlords and thus, reassured their tenants.

Because at the end of the day, it is our tenants who really matter.

Irrespective of Government legislation, it is our tenants who fuel our business. They pay the rent. They deserve a safe, secure and comfortable place to live. A responsible landlord will recognise this and work with a management agency who know that new legislation is not a hassle, it is Government trying to ensure a fair deal for everybody.

In our new year there will be challenges for landlords, funders and managing agents. I do not intend to spend 2017 railing against legislation. I shall spend it predicting how the legislation will impact upon our landlords and tenants. Then we shall do the right thing.

The legislation imposed upon the rental sector last year, and that to come this year is not draconian. It is imposed to weed out bad landlords and to encourage good landlords. Let us embrace it for the good of our tenants?

To quote my ancestor Marcus Tullius Cicero Rea, "Any man can make mistakes, but only an idiot persists in his error". 2017 will be a year of challenge in our business but only an idiot would miss the opportunities.

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"Philip was a life saver for restructuring my business with his positive nature of sorting things out smoothly and hassle free, I would highly recommend him for overseeing property portfolios, and communicating with professional bodies."

(London property investor)

A FRESH NEW START



May I first of all take this opportunity to wish all of the readers of this magazine a very prosperous and healthy 2017. Here in the property world, we are looking forward to hopefully steady market conditions throughout the next 12 months. The most important short term decision will be regarding Brexit and whether the House of Commons has to be consulted to trigger Article 50. Hopefully we will know this decision by mid-January and can move on to either a process of consulting all MPs or proceeding with the trigger by the end of March.

The housing market relies heavily on confidence, often established from a general feel-good factor from the economy. The current value of properties throughout the region remains at a very sensible level in comparison to prices 10 years ago and it will be 10 years in September 2017 that we will remember the effects of the banking crisis and the impact of the Northern Rock news.

Over the last 10 years, the economy has slowly regained confidence and we have seen house prices stabilize and, in certain parts of the region, increase in value, particularly those popular residential areas of Jesmond, Gosforth and Newcastle and some coastal hotspots, ie: Bamburgh, Beadnell and Alnmouth. Throughout the whole of the region, prices are a lot more stable now and demand has increased.

My forecast for 2017 welcomes a number of new homes sites and my company will be very busy this year working with a number of regional developers in some prime locations. Late March 2017 sees the launch of our highly acclaimed new development at Smiths Dock in North Shields. Our clients, Places for People and Urban Splash, will create some of the most exciting new styles of living throughout the North East. We are launching 34 townhouses

on the plateau in early Spring, followed later in the year by the Smokehouses, which will consist of 80 apartment-style properties close to the waterfront.

We also welcome in 2017 an exclusive development in Jesmond, working alongside our client Arch Developments, who are developing the former Barnardo's site, off Burdon Terrace, into a beautiful scheme of 11 luxury houses.

We continue to sell the remaining properties available in Hexham at Hexham Gate and in Ponteland at Mill Rise, both of which have been extremely popular, and January sees the opening of the new show apartment at Mill Rise.

Throughout the region we will be able to offer a variety of new exciting developments offering some diverse ranges of homes with beautiful interiors.

The new homes stock is essential, given that so very few new homes have been built in the last 10 years because of lack of confidence in the economy. It is now clear that planning permissions granted by local councils in various areas are expected to be executed quickly and a choice of homes made available and added to current stock levels, thereby increasing people's choice of where they can live and of what quality and value for money.

Here in Sanderson Young, we will continue to innovate the estate agency market, leading with the investment we have made in new software and refurbishment of some of the offices and their window displays, to ensure that our clients' properties are displayed to the best possible standards.

Our new social media policy is also opening up a variety of opportunities for our clients' houses to be seen throughout the region, by all age groups. I hope that my monthly video blog will increase people's knowledge of what is happening in the housing market so that they can be fully informed.

2016 was a positive year for the company, seeing growth increasing by 12% on the previous year. We would hope in 2017 to increase this once again, based on the increasing numbers of new homes properties available and choices for our buyers.

We very much look forward to helping and working with our clients past, current and future. Please do not hesitate to let me know if I can assist you in any way, by contacting me on my email Duncan.young@sandersonyoung.co.uk

With my very best wishes for an exciting year ahead.



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AFRICAN CHARITY BALL

In support of global charity Habitat for Humanity, Miller Homes North East's Charity Ball was hosted at the Newcastle Marriott Hotel Gosforth Park. The leading housebuilder selected Habitat for Humanity as its chosen charity for 2016, pledging to raise £100,000 as a national company throughout the year.

The African themed ball saw guests greeted by fire entertainers and stilt walkers, whilst entertainment throughout the evening included snake charmers, live music and dance acts. An African theme was chosen as 17 members of the Miller Homes team visited Malawi on Habitat for Humanity's Global Village Trip earlier this year and built habitat homes for those living in poverty housing.

Speeches were given by Miller Homes' Chief Executive Chris Endsor, as well as Tum Kazunga, the head income generator at Habitat for Humanity.

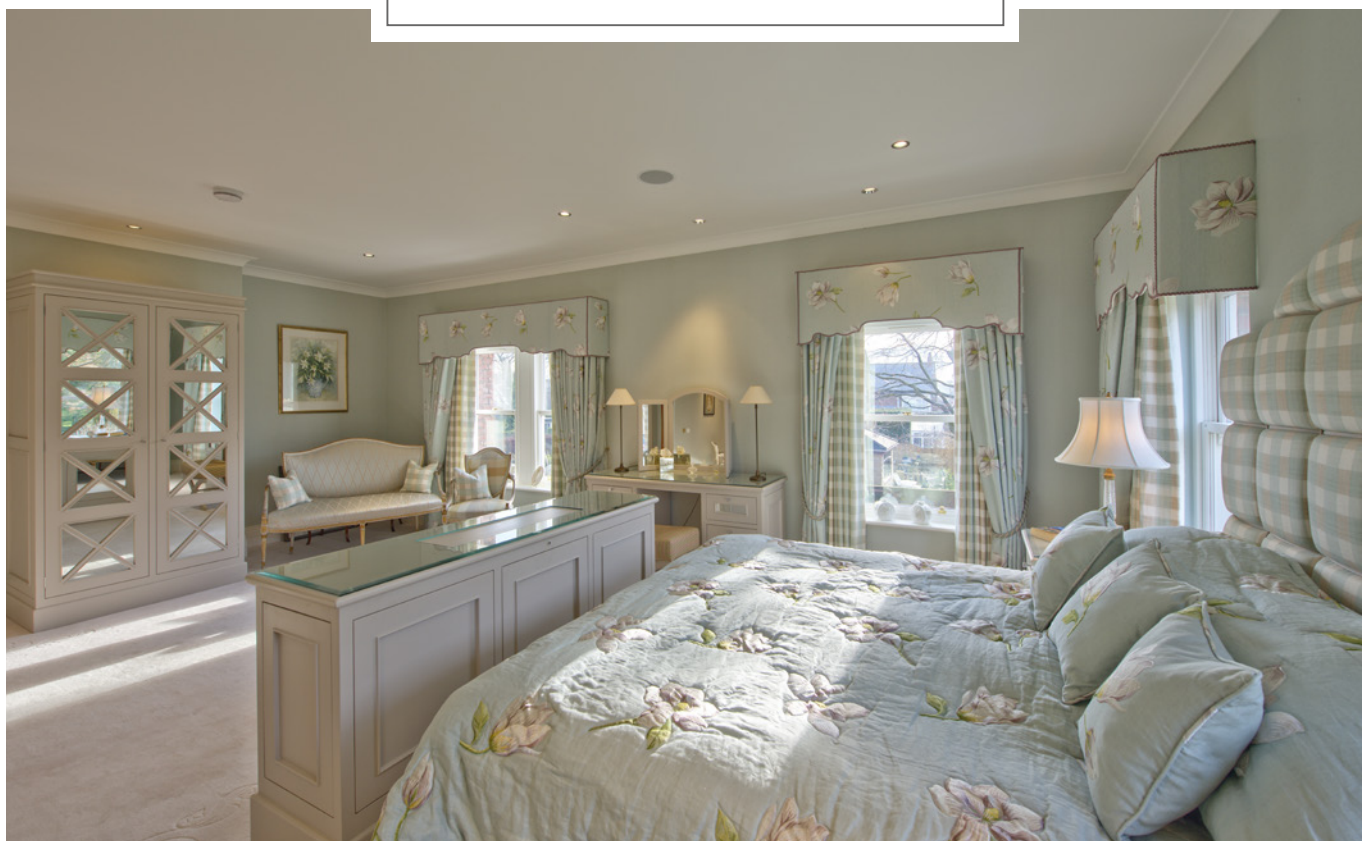




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ASK SILVER BULLET



“I keep reading references to Content Marketing - what exactly is this?”

In essence, Content Marketing is the creation and distribution of valuable and high quality content to your audience with the object of increasing the quantity of your audience, the level of their engagement and the awareness of your brand. Successful content marketing will then hopefully lead to more engagement, more enquiries and, of course, ultimately more sales.

You are, in effect, giving information away free of charge, in the hope that your audience begins to value and trust your content, thereby trusting and valuing your brand. Whilst it's very relevant in the digital age, it's not at all new, with the printed equivalent being reports and white papers that were seen as respected and unbiased content by their readers.

The main point is that successful content is editorially-minded providing educational information without the sales pitch as most consumers, both current and potential, do not want to hear marketing, or advertising messages. Conversely, modern day consumers have a real desire for "content", a thirst for relevant information that is seemingly unquenchable

and content marketing can give consumers that information.

The digital age has given marketers a plethora of channels to put out content, especially video and social media, and a growing number of devices to ensure that they can connect with their audience virtually on a 24/7 basis. The skill of the marketer is to understand his or her audience, what content will interest them and what channel to use to deliver this – in this, nothing has changed from traditional advertising and marketing – what message, to whom and how?

What has changed, however, is the trust savvy consumers now place in content against traditional advertising. The 2015 Nielsen Global Trust in Advertising Report found that across the world, the medium people tend to trust (or like) the least is text ads, specifically on mobile, where 65% of digital media is being consumed. On the list of trusted mediums, however, editorial content outranked ads on TV, radio and billboards, as well as in newspapers and magazines.

Primarily, Content Marketing can build trust by

the creation of useful and interesting content – the audience trusts the content and therefore trusts the business. The content should never be about you or your business, which would be the direct hard sell, but rather information, links and background relevant to your sector - even your most enthusiastic customers are more interested in what you can do for them for free!

Good content will not only increase engagement with existing customers creating a richer experience as a solid basis of referral and repeat business, but it will also attract new business, the lifeblood of any organisation, by being shared on social media and discussed. Another potential area of benefit is the development of new business ideas – to find out exactly what your customers want and even trying out new products.

Remember, sales are not the be all and end all of this marketing – 85% of businesses use content marketing not for an initial sale but to develop the engagement, increase consumer confidence and create brand awareness, all of which will, in turn, yes, you guessed it, lead to increased sales.

Do you need some assistance with your marketing? Do you need to review your strategy or do you have another marketing question we can help with? Talk to us. Email your questions anonymously to us today hello@silverbulletmarketing.co.uk or Tweet us (not so anonymously) @SilverBulletPR and use the hash tag #AskSB

AMG AND KAROL MARKETING PLAN SIGNIFICANT CONSUMER OUTREACH PROGRAMME



AMG and Karol Marketing have entered into a new contract which will see the PR company oversee Vango's significant investment in consumer PR as the global outdoor brand seeks to strengthen its reach into mainstream media in 2017.

The new programme will see Karol Marketing represent all press relations within mainstream media and work alongside Vango's new PR Co-ordinator Cameron Steel, who will handle specialist press in-house.

Karol Marketing's brief will focus on developing Vango's status as the UK's leading camping brand through national and consumer lifestyle press, with Vango's in-house team driving forward brand awareness with specialist outdoor titles and social media campaigns.

In representing Vango, Karol Marketing have been behind some of the brand's most creative campaigns including Vango's collaboration with VisitScotland, the #viewfrommytent social media appeal and the "launching" of the first tent in space. This relationship is set to continue as Karol Marketing continue to work hand-in-hand with Vango's in-house team.

RAMARKETING NAMED TOP NORTH-EAST AGENCY

Creative, digital and PR agency ramarketing is celebrating after being named 'Outstanding PR Consultancy of the year' at the CIPR PRide North East Awards ceremony.

Beating stiff competition from some of the region's biggest and most established creative agencies, judges praised the team at ramarketing for its sustained business growth, company culture and the results it has delivered for clients locally, nationally and internationally.

Hosted at The Biscuit Factory in Newcastle, the annual CIPR awards recognise successful PR firms and communication campaigns from across the region. This is the first time the Newcastle based agency has scooped the gold award after coming runner-up in 2015.

Founder of ramarketing, Raman Sehgal, said: "We have worked really hard in creating a niche in the chemical, pharmaceutical and manufacturing space. Our team has doubled in size over the last year and we have invested heavily in our staff to give us a solid foundation to take ramarketing to the next level. I am so grateful to our clients, staff, suppliers and friends for their support as this would not be possible without them."



CHRISTMAS BAKE OFF PROVES A TREAT FOR MACMILLAN CANCER CARE



Award-winning North East brand and digital agency, Unwritten Creative, hosted a festive charity Bake-off inspired by a colleague's experience of cancer.

The Newcastle-based agency, led by Directors Lisa Eaton and Amy Jackson, hoped to give Mary Berry a run for her money with its bake-off style coffee morning for Macmillan Cancer. The event was organised by the company's Senior Web Designer Lisa McFarlane who sadly lost her dad to cancer.

Staff invited a host of clients to their offices hoping to impress with a variety of show-stopping treats. The crowd of tasters had the opportunity to release their inner judge on the amateur bakers by scoring the treats. Senior Designer Natalie McVay was judged as the overall winner of the event with her delicious offering of Lemon Drizzle cake.

Unwritten Creative raised £248 for the cancer support charity with the help of its clients. The left-over cakes were donated to The Peoples Kitchen, a local charity offering food to those in need.

INSIGHT MEETS INSPIRATION

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GET READY TO ROAR ABOUT YOUR BUSINESS

Northern businesses now have the opportunity to roar about what they have on offer thanks to a new app developed by a North East entrepreneur which is already proving to be a roaring success.



Andrew Bartlett has developed an app that allows restaurants, cafes, nightclubs and bars to promote their products and events. However, RoarApp does not rely on the user searching for what's on offer; the app searches for them.

And RoarApp will work in any town or city in the world. Plus, it has a safety feature that could help users when they're out and about.

Andrew has already begun to sign-up business in Newcastle, Sunderland, Durham and Middlesbrough. He hopes to cover most of the UK by the end of 2017.

So, how does it work for those people who want to hunt for somewhere to go?

Easy. Go onto the App Store and download RoarApp...it's the one with the lion's head in a purple swirl.

They'll need to sign up with an email and password. After that, they simply allow the app to know their location and away they go. First of all, they type in the place they'd like to explore, eg...Durham. Then hit the bars, clubs or restaurants tab, and a whole host of places will drop down. Click on a bar for example...let's say Fabio's...and the app will instantly provide with how far away it is from the user, the address, a map, opening times and a contact telephone number. There are plenty of photos too. Brilliant.

The user can then add this to a 'plan' which is, in effect, their list of favourite places, and even request whether to receive special offers. The favourites can be shared with any friends who're also on RoarApp. There is everything from the major chains all the way down to one-man / woman operations.

Of course, this is ideal for any business. You now have the opportunity to tell potential customers who you are, where you are and what you have on offer. If you suddenly decide to promote something in a bid to 'drive' some footfall, simply go onto the Roar App. Too often there is a charge for doing something like this. Refreshingly, that isn't the case with RoarApp. Venues can contribute to RoarApp free of charge. Updates are free too. So, if things look a bit quiet, log onto your own RoarApp page, put on a special offer, this will then go to everyone who has signed-up to follow you and, with a bit of luck, get ready for the sound of rushing feet.

As with most things in life, the simple ideas are the best. But, there is also a wonderful spin-off to RoarApp which could save lives.

RoarApp allows users to create groups of friends. This can be done by adding names to the RoarApp of using Facebook. Andrew has also just launched a terrific new safety feature called 'Find My Friends.' RoarApp notifies your group if you or one of your friends/family has left a radius in an unfamiliar way. It recognises patterns, so if a user's movements indicate difficulties, RoarApp picks up on this and notifies the rest of the group. Also, if their phone stops working, RoarApp will automatically log where they were located most recently. As soon as the friends realise that there may be a problem, they can then 'mobilise the troops' to find out what's wrong.

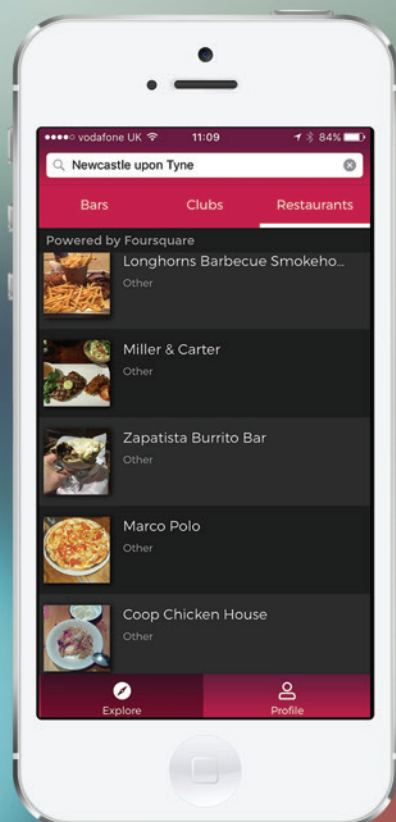
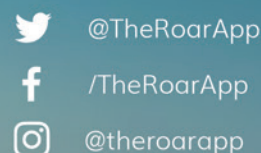
"I'm delighted with the way RoarApp is progressing and how well it has been received by both businesses and individuals", said Andrew Bartlett.

We already have thousands of people using RoarApp to find bars, clubs and restaurants. The feedback from businesses has been terrific.

"The safety aspect of RoarApp is something that we're keen to develop in an effort to ensure that our users can look after themselves and their friends when their out and about."

If you have a business and can see the advantage of promoting who you are and what you can provide via RoarApp, then get in touch with Andrew at the following...

App queries: app@theroarapp.com Venue queries: venues@theroarapp.com Press queries: press@theroarapp.com
You should also go onto the App Store and download RoarApp to try it for yourself and see what you're missing.



Find the right Bars, Clubs and Restaurants

The RoarApp is designed to help you find the best Bars, Clubs and Restaurants in any city in the world.

You can choose to follow venues, which gives you access to special offers on drinks, meals, entry or any other events or news created and hosted by your venues.

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- 📞 Regular radio coverage. We are partnered with Capital and Heart Radio, so RoarApp users know exactly what is going on in your area.
- 📞 Free exposure to our large audience on social media.
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LOOKING BACK OVER THE PAST TEN YEARS...



Full service marketing, advertising and digital agency, The Works reached their milestone tenth birthday last year and they certainly achieved a lot in one decade – in fact, they achieved a substantial amount last year alone.

In the last ten years, the industries we work in have changed dramatically. We've seen the evolution of the press release, the rise of digital media, the decline (and resurgence) of print, advertising tactics mature and the need for brands to create a personal connection with their customers become increasingly vital– it's safe to say the once solid line between PR, marketing and advertising has now become a mere faint line in the sand.

With the industry moving so fast and our clients' needs continuously changing, the type of work we produce for our clients has evolved along the way. This change has seen us diversify into new territories which has included expanding our now 19-strong account management, creative and studio teams, merging with a web development company and introducing a brand specialist to the team to offer our clients a holistic marketing approach fit for today's world.

As we approached our milestone tenth birthday last year, we knew we wanted to give something back to those who had helped us along the way. The result? An aim of raising £10,000 for North East charities - The Sir Bobby Robson Foundation,



The Rainbow Trust and Tyne Housing Association, and a celebration ball to say thanks to all our clients, suppliers, team members, family and friends who had helped us get to where we were.

By the time we got to the mid-way point in our celebratory year we had already smashed our target and raised £15,000 to split between the three charities, enabling them to continue carrying out their increasingly important work here in the North East. This money was raised through various team fundraising activities and by our clients and suppliers on the night of our ball in our various games, raffles and auction- something we're extremely proud of.

And the good news didn't stop there- increased client workloads and new client wins meant we were able to expand our creative team, and to round the year off we were awarded the CIM Northern Award for Best Public Sector Campaign for our work with Gateshead College on their re-brand and summer recruitment campaign projects- it's safe to say our milestone year went off with a bang!

The success we've achieved over the years is the result of a lot of hard work, commitment and loyal relationships between our team, clients, suppliers and friends and last year was a celebration for them, as well as us. The types of work we produce may have changed in the past decade, but one thing has remained the same, the relationships you have with people can make or break you. If people like you, they will listen to you, but if they trust you, they'll do business with you and that's what matters.

It's safe to say the past ten years have been very exciting for us as an industry and business and we're looking forward to seeing what the coming years bring- here's to a successful 2017!

Thanks for the first ten years x

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PREDICTIONS FOR 2017? WHO KNOWS?



Christian Cerisola

2016, huh? That was weird.

Given all the shocks it brought with it, it makes these forecasting pieces all the more tricky. I'm most definitely going to avoid any political predictions and stick to events in the media landscape. So keep this one back, show it to me in December and laugh at how misguided I really was.

As the last 12 months have shown us, predicting anything in the future is pretty tough. The best we can all do is remain agile and alert and be flexible enough to be responsive to whatever is thrown at us. So what should we try and prepare for in 2017? Here's my five things in media:

Something to happen with Twitter

Twitter's stuck rigidly to what it knows, but far too rigidly and it feels in desperate need of something new to happen with it. Attempts to pump new life into passed by without much fanfare in 2016 (Moments, anyone?) and a large number feel they actually ditched its most creative and exciting tool in Vine.

While Facebook and Instagram consistently adapt themselves to fit new trends, Twitter's core usage benefits have remained steadfast. As a result, numbers aren't growing at the rate they should and potential buyers in Disney, Google and Salesforce gave it a wide berth. This could be the year that they're bought at a knockdown price, or it introduces something radically different to make it relevant again. The fact that the new President of the Free World will keep it in the headlines with his comments on the platform won't actually help its cause.

More paywalls

I got into a little discussion with a couple of former national newspaper editors at the back end of last

year on how news should monetise itself. National news is available from far too many alternative free sources so it's a tough job for all at the traditional news outlets. Expect The Times to follow the suit of its stablemate at the Sun and drop its paywall in 2017. The new online numbers the red-top is attracting are just far too appealing to keep The Times lagging behind.

However, don't be surprised if other more niche titles, offering specialist insight, industry-specific topics and box office columnists, spot the chance to prosper behind paid-for entry. One of those editors above predicted that a very big outlet could deliberately become more niche and start charging its educated, left-wing readership for its online product.

Welcome to dark social

Sounds murky and illicit, right? It's really not. It's simply a collective description for the non-public conversations that are taking place, like those on private messaging apps, such as WhatsApp. Worryingly for brands, you cannot watch, measure or infiltrate conversations that might be happening around your brand in these because of their encrypted nature. Expect many more brands to try to exert some control of these conversations. As an example, I subscribe to three very good brands using WhatsApp to send updates and news to their customers. I imagine I'll let many more in throughout 2017. We tried it with a client in 2016,

but for a couple of reasons, it didn't quite work. We'll crack that nut this year.

Brands go Live

Facebook's live platform was tremendously well received last year and that will become an enormously popular and powerful tool in generating engagement and loyalty. Of course you can plan what you're going to do while live (please don't just switch it on during your Monday morning meeting and expect fireworks online), but the very nature of it means there's an element of unpredictable danger and excitement to the content being produced. That's very, very appealing to the punter.

Back to the truth

Lies, lies and more lies dominated the media landscape of 2016. The leavers' £350m for the NHS that never was, The Donald's numerous promises that he's now stepping away from, Facebook's issues with proliferating fake news into our feeds.

So why don't we just start peddling lies about our services or products because the truth doesn't matter in your relentless pursuit of successful outcomes, right? Well, if you want to try that, you're more than welcome. The truth is too easy to find now, so be prepared for the storm that comes your way if you start trying to deceive, hoodwink or patronise your customers. Honesty and authenticity remains as powerful as ever. Keep that in mind this year.



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THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS



When coming out of full-time education you're expected to know there and then what you want to do with the rest of your life. It can be daunting but you can only work it to your advantage. One of the most important things to consider when choosing your career path is what you actually want to do for the rest of your life, what are you good at and more importantly, what do you enjoy?

With tuition fees constantly rising, young people are finding themselves wondering whether the £30k debit is worth it. Without even starting their degree, universities expect thousands of pounds from students forcing them in to a life of paying off massive debts. The 'student life' can seem tempting with constant parties and social opportunities, but is that really what you're paying for? If you're going to get yourself in debt up to your eyeballs, you may want to avoid spending it on nights out and cheap kebabs.

During the decision of my career choice, I sat myself down and asked, where do I see myself in a few years? I decided I liked to socialise and work closely with the valued opinions of important people. That led me straight down the path of PR and marketing. But would sitting in a classroom every day really benefit me in such a 'hands-on' field of work? It was with this thought that I decided to really explore my options and do some research in to the benefits of university in comparison to an apprenticeship.

One of the largest benefits for me when considering an apprenticeship was the diverse mixture of education and work based learning. With the

chance to settle in to two different atmospheres, an apprenticeship was the best of both worlds for me. With marketing and PR being my first career choice, it was then that I was introduced to the hard-working team of the Jammy Dodgers! After applying for a place to become the next Digital Marketing Assistant at JAM Marketing, I received a call back and passed my initial interview. I thought I had done my research to its full extent; however, the world of digital marketing is a lot more complex than I had first understood. You may think that digital marketing involves posting on Facebook and Twitter for a living, but I can tell you first hand, you are wrong. With constant hustle and bustle in the office, the Jammy Dodgers have truly shown me how much work is put in to a marketing business to make it successful.

On my first day, I expected to be making coffees and changing printing toner due to the exceeding reputation of apprentices being given tedious tasks to fill the time. However, I was thrown straight in the deep and accepted as a valuable member of the team straight away. My responsibilities involve writing posts for multiple clients across social media platforms such as, Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and Pinterest. As well as this, I

am sometimes given the delightful task of writing editorials and blogs on behalf of our clients; this is one of my favourite jobs! When I started JAM I was very surprised to be trusted with the task of writing for clients however, when I completed my first blog, the client had no changes to make and it was published soon after. I was ecstatic and well praised within the office team. After being given the task of writing, it was then that I was shown that an apprenticeship does not always consist of faxing, copying and being told what to do in an unappreciative manner.

When choosing the path to your future, do your research. Do you work better in a learning environment? If so, possibly starting your first steps at a university would be more suited, but is the money worth it? When applying for university, sit and think about how much effort you are willing to put in to your course? If you're not going to attend classes or put in the work, a place at university would be a waste and someone else may really use it to its full potential. If you're like me and prefer a more 'hands on' approach to work, an apprenticeship may really compliment your future aspirations.

2017: OUR DIGITAL PREDICTIONS



With the New Year now in full swing, Brett Jacobson Managing Director from Digital Marketing Agency Mediaworks shares his predictions for what digital will hold in 2017.

The digital domain is constantly changing - in 2016 alone, we saw everything from algorithm updates to index changes and shifts in how we interact digitally. 2017 is poised to be no different - here's what you can expect from the year ahead:

The continued growth of mobile

Mobile has witnessed outstanding growth over the past few years. In October 2016, we witnessed a mobile milestone, as web browsing on smartphones and tablets overtook desktop for the first time (51.3% vs. 48.7%). Clearly indicating a shift in how we access the web, mobile is firmly on Google's radar too.

Last October, they announced a mobile-first index, illustrating Google's plans for increasingly mobile-centric search. This focus is something we can expect to see grow over the next 12 months. If you haven't already implemented a mobile-friendly site, now is the time to do so.

RankBrain

RankBrain is Google's machine-learning, artificial intelligence (AI) system. Part of the Hummingbird algorithm, it's used to help process searches and display the most relevant results for queries. Essentially, by understanding user intent and how users search, RankBrain is able to group and refine search results to improve the overall search experience.

In 2016, it was announced that RankBrain now processes every single Google search; just nine months previous, it was processing 15% of searches. It's the

third most important Google ranking factor, behind content and links. If this year's surge in usage is anything to go by, it's set to continue next year.

Voice search

Tying in with the launch of voice-enabled devices like Amazon Echo and Google Home, voice search has witnessed significant growth in 2016. Between 2015 and 2016, the number of searches on virtual assistants like GoogleNow, Siri and Cortana grew from a statistical zero to 10% — or 50 billion searches globally — in just 12 months. In addition, Google confirmed that 20% of all searches have voice intent.

By 2020, it's predicted that 50% of all searches will be by voice; in 2017, we anticipate its continued growth. While it's not expected that this search type will overtake screen searches, digital strategies will have to change to reflect the shift in how users find information and how to monetise this channel.

The customer experience

Businesses are focusing heavily on the overall customer experience (CX). By developing a user-centric digital approach they can drive efficiencies and meet customer expectations. Tying in with the above — specifically mobile and voice search — an omni-channel customer experience should be at the heart of your digital strategy for 2017 onwards.

Staying ahead of digital trends in 2017 is key to ensuring your brand's success. Get in touch with Mediaworks to find out how to dominate digital this year.



HADRIAN BREWERY OPENS FIRST PUB

Tyneside based Hadrian Border Brewery recently opened its first ever real ale pub and celebrated with a private party at Station East.

This iconic Victorian pub – formerly known as The Station Hotel – is located on Hills Street, on the Gateshead side between the Tyne and High Level Bridges.

The purchase and investment in this quirky pub signals a new phase in the development of Hadrian Border Brewery, which is owned by husband and wife team Andy and Shona Burrows. The couple see retail as the next step in the commercial expansion of the business.



NEW YEAR RESOLUTION FOR BUSINESSES SHOULD BE TO SAVE MONEY...



Now we're firmly settled into the New Year and the Christmas festivities are finished, money management lies ahead. What better way to shake off the New Year's hangover and kick off January than by saving money for your business.

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The Diamond Group can then show you precisely where your company can make savings with no compromise on service.

How is your companies' broadband for example? A little slow? Frustratingly so? Diamond's solutions can be tailored to suit your business at a cost to suit your budget. Diamond broadband opens up a wide range of cloud solutions, for example Diamond's Cloud phones.

The Diamond Group also offers speciality services in IT, business mobile and business systems including photocopiers and printers as well as asset finance, which offers you a one-stop-shop for your business. It makes much more sense to group all these four services together and receive a comprehensive discount on all your business requirements. Get in touch with the Diamond Group to organise your own free no obligations telecoms audit today.

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DATA EVENT HELPS DRIVE NORTH EAST BUSINESSES FORWARD



Twenty-seven senior managers from seventeen prominent companies, organisations and charities came together recently at the Data Driven Business Conference, each seeking to understand how they could exploit the huge amount of data their companies hold.

The event was hosted by Hippo, the data driven marketing experts, as well as their partners ITPS and Ward Hadaway. If the feedback was anything to go by, it was a huge success, one that will be repeated in 2017.

Jason Sullock, UK Marketing Manager for Hippo, said: "We knew there was a need to understand how to use and exploit data by mid-size businesses in the North East, but even we didn't realise just how much of an appetite there was!"

Jason continued: "We've already got plans to hold another re-run of the first Data Driven Business Conference in Teesside this January and the second in the series in Tyne and Wear in February."

RECRUITMENT APP CHOOSES NORTH EAST FOR NATIONAL LAUNCH



When Newcastle-born Ben Maughan was looking for somewhere to launch a trailblazing new app, he knew there was only one place for it: the North East.

HiUp looks set to revolutionise the recruitment industry by giving jobseekers a place to create a virtual CV. The app finds jobs which match specific skills and experience and identifies any training which the jobseeker could carry out to improve their employability. It also allows them to apply for accredited courses to study.

Despite having set up offices in Ireland, Europe, USA, Australia and the Middle East, the firm chose the North East for its official release. The local launch was all thanks to Ben, the company's UK Marketing Director who felt his home city was the perfect place to unveil HiUp to the world.

Employers now benefit from not having to pay recruitment agency fees. Instead, they get instant access to potential employees with relevant qualifications.

PERFECT IMAGE CELEBRATES ANNUAL STAFF SATISFACTION RESULTS

A North East-based technology solutions provider is celebrating the results of its annual staff satisfaction survey which found that 99% of staff are proud to work for the company.

Over eight out of ten employees asked stated that they have great job satisfaction, were very satisfied with the progression opportunities available to them and felt that their contribution to the company was valued.

Celebrating its 25th anniversary year, Perfect Image's CEO Andrew Robson acknowledged that the

company's continued success was down to its people.

He said: "Without the right people in our business, none of what we do for our clients would be possible. I'm a firm believer that in order to really make a difference to our clients' businesses, we need to start with our own and that begins with our people."

Perfect Image is a trusted provider of choice for many business in the North East and across the rest of the UK with customers including Bellway Homes Ltd, Halfords and Ringtons.



MOBILE SOLUTION TO REDUCE TIME AND COST OF ENGINEERING DATA

North East-based engineering software and services provider Phusion IM has pushed ahead of its competitors with the launch of a revolutionary mobile solution, which is fully integrated with its existing suite of Engineering Data Management (EDM) solutions.

Phusion Onsite is a powerful mobile and web-based tool for data collection, inspection and management of asset information. It can be used on Apple, Android and Windows devices and also works seamlessly with the company's established suite of software tools and other third party enterprise systems and

databases. Certified mobile and tablet devices can be supplied for data collection and ATEX inspections in hazardous areas up to zone 1 classification.

The tool has already been rolled out to a number of clients across various sectors, covering Facility Management, Process Industries and Utilities sectors. The benefits being realised are image capture, reporting, creation of audit trails for internal and external use, ease of adoption, condensed and sped up work flows and compatibility with existing enterprise systems such as SAP.

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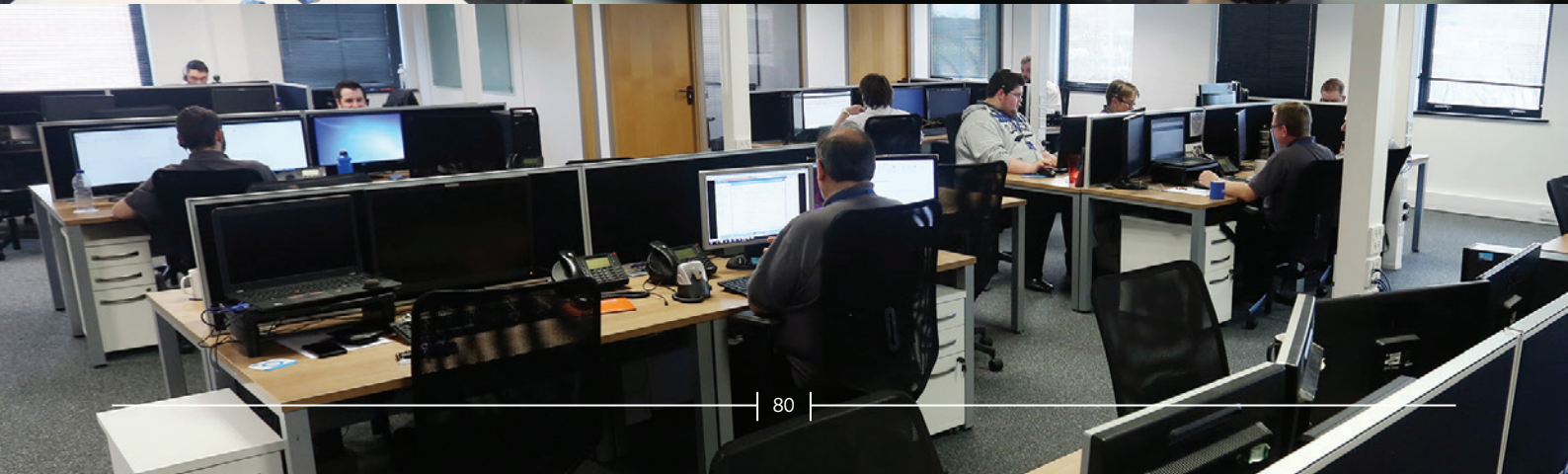
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CONFIDENCE IS A COMMON CHARACTERISTIC AMONG BUSINESS LEADERS, AND GARRY SHERIFF, MANAGING DIRECTOR OF ICT EXPERTS ITPS, IS NO EXCEPTION.

"We operate in a highly competitive industry, and while others purport to be able to do what we do, they just don't do it as well. That's not just us saying it, it's what our clients tell us," he said.

The facts bear out his words. The last 17 years since its creation have seen Gateshead-based ITPS carve out a unique reputation as the North East's leading ICT company, using its unrivalled levels of IT expertise, technical support and customer service to help clients across the UK achieve their business goals.

Specialising in strategic IT consultancy and support, implementation, data centre services and unified communications, ITPS works with clients spanning a wide range of sectors including shipping, financial services and law, from large corporates and SMEs through to local authorities, charities and blue light organisations.

Last month saw the business invest a significant sum in moving to new headquarters, as it gears up to support its rapidly-growing client base across the UK.

The move to larger premises increases the available square footage by 30%, and is the second milestone in the company's organic growth, which in 2014 saw it invest in a third state of the art data centre, a 33,000sq ft £4m operation giving clients the fastest connectivity in the North East plus access to a wide range of flexible, scalable ICT services including a 350-seat workspace recovery facility.

Earlier this year ITPS announced it was joining forces with Coniston Computers, creating a customer base of over 500 organisations.

Garry Sheriff takes up the story: "We are not far from achieving 20 successful years in one of the world's fastest-moving sectors, which is no small achievement in the face of the incredible pace of technological advances.

Our success has been built on an unswerving commitment to listening to clients and helping them to make the right choices about adopting future-proof technology solutions. We stand apart from competitors because our business is based on delivering business solutions and services, not just ICT solutions.

As technology gets more complex and many of the decision makers we deal with are not techies, some of them are wary about handing over the reins to a third party. They simply want their technology to help them cut costs and improve productivity and efficiency.

Much of their concern is around not fully understanding the issues and implications, and that's where we add real value as true partners who can educate and guide clients - never dictating to them - to help support them in the decision-making process.

Technology moves fast and it's our job to identify and analyse trends and be ahead of the curve, so our clients don't need to worry about it.

Take the big data society that has developed over the last decade. How we capture, store and manipulate data hugely impacts on our personal and professional lives, and data-driven enterprises are now said to be up to 26% more profitable than their peers.

Several years ago we adjusted our long term business plan to include a big investment in data centre, business continuity and recovery services. Adopting this strategy meant we were ideally placed to meet the demand from organisations who are making data a number one priority."

Garry believes the biggest factor in the company's success is the quality of its people: "We have a highly skilled, committed team here and it is gratifying when we win repeat business from clients such as our long-standing customer the offshore renewable energy organisation Catapult, which has to go out to tender under its regulatory framework. In the last round of tenders we won a four-year contract against 80 other suppliers, which is testament to our reputation for our team's 'can do' attitude and reputation for excellent service delivery.

Other factors that have contributed to our healthy order book include global events such as Brexit and the Safe Harbour Agreement, sparking contracts with a growing number of large, Southern-based organisations.

One of these came about when a large email marketing service provider needed to exit Telecity datacentre in London, which had been bought by an American company and its customers were concerned about the protection of their data.

Another case involved us working with a £450m turnover NHS-linked client, which after careful discussions and due diligence opted to relocate its ICT to the North East.

Never have businesses been faced with such

a world of choice, and this 'South to North' trend validates our commitment to service development. If we were not able to offer the range and calibre of services that organisations like these require, they simply would not buy from us."

Across the business, a steady upward shift in new client acquisition combined with the number of clients committing to five and seven-year contracts has seen staff numbers grow, accelerating the company's search for bigger premises.

Having spent 18 months searching for the right property, the ideal location turned out to be just yards away from ITPS's previous headquarters on Metrocentre East Business Park in Dunston. The company's investment in the move includes a full refurbishment of the 10,500sq ft offices, creating an airy, open plan working environment complete with meeting rooms, breakout spaces, café areas and even staff showers.

So what does the future hold for this thriving business?

"The next five years will see us continue to focus on data centre-centric services including backup and high speed communications, as clients move towards buying ICT as a managed service just like any other utility," added Garry.

"Five years ago our plans were to increase staff levels to 100, create a top level, high security data centre and move to bigger offices. We achieved all that ahead of target.

Ten years ago we moved to larger premises quadrupling our space, but a couple of years into it we realised we were quickly going to run out of room again. This latest move and the configuration options and layout of the building have afforded us 50% more working space for staff, which should see us through the next few years, and support our plans to hit a £25m turnover.

Our technical reputation is very strong, and it is not unusual for competitors to turn to us for advice on particularly thorny technical issues. While we don't spend our time looking over our shoulder, we are well aware that as the North East's leading IT experts, our competitors are always behind us watching what we do and hoping to replicate it.

We are never complacent about our success, but I believe we will achieve our long term growth targets, and we are looking forward to the future with confidence."



ITPS AND CELLULAR'S CHRISTMAS TURKEY CUP

Partners ITPS and Cellular Solutions held their annual Turkey Cup at the stunning Close House golf club last month. Clients and associates of the two companies enjoyed festive food and drinks following the Texas scramble competition. The Christmas jumpers were pleasing on the eye but with surprisingly mild December weather, it turned out they weren't an essential for keeping the cold at bay.





IN CONVERSATION WITH

PAUL CURRY

MANAGING DIRECTOR, AERO NETWORKS

**What were your career ambitions growing up?**

Genuinely, I didn't have any. I was an underachiever at school, not in an obtrusive way but still falling short of the grade. Computers were making a precedent into education in the mid 80's, however they were limited to the upper achievers in maths/science. Putting that to one side, I knew they were here to stay.

Can you briefly outline your career path for the readers?

I left school with poor GCSE results, drifted through a few retail and office jobs, then progressed up the career ladder playing the old fashioned game, hard work and determination. After 16 years working for an organisation I decided to setup a family business, which I guess 10 years later is where Ben and I are now.

What inspired you to form your own business?

The time was right. I'd reached a plateau in previous employment. Frustrated with a lack of promotion progress and the inability to add my own finesse to service process/procedures, I made the best decision of my life to step out and make my own way, with great influence from my late father-in-law. It was quite daunting on the 1st of June 2006, however 10 years later I now know I should have done it many years earlier.

Can you tell us what you're currently working on?

We've got a great cloud platform coming in 2017. Cloud technologies are now presenting themselves as being accessible to all organisations. We are primarily geared towards the professional/financial sectors, however our flexible cloud offering can be easily adapted to most business requirements.

Summarise your greatest business achievement to date?

Without a doubt, bringing my eldest son Ben into Aero. Watching him evolve from successfully completing his A Levels, to becoming a Microsoft qualified IT Support Engineer, then progressing into a role of our commercial director and now my business partner.

Whats the best piece of business advice you've been given?

Great question. An old friend who runs a successful car dealership in London said: "Focus on the elements you can positively change, forget about the negative aspects you can't."

What does the future hold for Aero?

Great things, watch this space.

Who are your heroes both in and out of business?

In business I've got a healthy respect for anyone who's gone out on their own, taken the risks and made it. On a personal note I was very fortunate to meet Joe Strummer from The Clash. I spent a short time talking to him back in 91, outside a very cold City Hall in December. His positivity and outlook on life was immeasurable. He sadly departed in 2002, Legend.

How do you like to relax?

With family, friends, good food and great music. Aside from that, Ben and I do a track day at least once every 2 months. Never competitive though, he's a much better driver than I am...

Whats your favourite book and why?

A Kestrel for a Knave by Barry Hines. It's direct, stereotypically northern, no gloss and straight to the point.

How would you like to be remembered?

Flattering question, ask me again in maybe 10 years please. Thanks, Paul.

What motivates you?

“Family, looking after my team at Aero and doing a great job for clients.”



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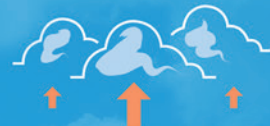
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Graham Wylie Foundation Awards First Grant

£10,000 cheque presentation to Chris Rollings (Headteacher of Hadrian School) by Graham Wylie of the Graham Wylie Foundation.

Also in attendance were Angie Jenkison (Chief Executive of the foundation) and local entrepreneur, Rob Armstrong (long time supporter of Hadrian School).

Funds given will go to the under construction new rebound therapy centre that many children will benefit from for many years to come.



THE MAN WHO BUILT HADRIAN'S WALL... AND THE FLOORS AND THE CEILINGS



Rob Armstrong is a successful businessman and entrepreneur from Newcastle. Working his way up through the tough business world from an even tougher upbringing in a part of the city suffering from severe social deprivation, Rob now has some of the most widely respected and successful businesses in the North East. Amongst his businesses he has directorships at LA Taxis and recently sold his share in employment specialists MTrec Recruitment.

Here, we learn about Rob's passion for helping the children at a Newcastle school.

Hadrian School in Benwell, Newcastle looks after some of the most severely disabled children in the North East and Rob has literally put his heart and soul into helping them get the best educational experience that they can.

Rob started his association with the school more than 15 years ago when he replaced computers that were stolen by callous thieves. Ever since, he has been a driving force in fundraising both personally and through his many business connections.

Now, he is putting his fund raising efforts into attracting new donations such as a recent one for £10,000 from the Graham Wylie Foundation. The latest batch of money will go towards the construction of a new rebound therapy area with training suite and a music studio.

The new build is about to begin in earnest with early foundation work already started with the main works scheduled to begin in January with completion by the Summer of 2017.

The centre will house six trampolines and related therapy resources to enable Rebound Therapy to take place six days a week from 9:00am until 8:00pm for the benefit of pupils from Hadrian School and for those with additional needs of all

ages in Newcastle and across the region. Sports England has also generously supported the project for the benefit of the disabled community.

Rob has been the main sponsor and driver of the project from day one and has used his business connections and friends to help with the fundraising machine. Whether it was encouraging others to buy tickets for Summer Balls or donating auction prizes and raffles, Rob has made it his passion to look after the youngsters at the school. He also raffled off his Newcastle United box at St James' Park on a number of occasions too raising many thousands of pounds. It is estimated that Rob has sourced somewhere in the region of £450,000 for the school.

Head Teacher Chris Rollings has nothing but praise for Rob's generosity.

"Were it not for Rob, this project would have remained a distant dream. Rob has a generous spirit, a kind heart, a real sense of his roots and knows how lucky he is to have been given the life chances he has. He knows that our children are some of the most vulnerable children in the city and he wants to make a difference. Our school motto is 'Together we make a difference' and with Rob's help, support and friendship that is about to happen on a massive scale with a legacy that will continue to make a massive difference to the

lives of those less able for years to come. This will be part of Rob's legacy and one we are proud to partner."

Indeed, the school have shown their gratitude by naming the new centre, the Rob Armstrong Centre for Rebound Therapy, an honour that Rob was proud to accept.

"It makes me very humble when I see the children in the school," he said. "I watch the way Chris and his team work with them to ensure that they receive the very best care, support and education."

"There is a tremendous amount of good work going on now and when the centre is complete it will be the best Rebound Therapy Training Centre in the UK. The project will allow the school to train teachers, physiotherapists, teaching and learning assistants, occupational therapists, sports coaches, care staff, special needs and support staff to be excellent Rebound Therapy coaches. They will also work closely with parents to train them to be able to support their own children with Rebound Therapy programmes."

"I'm delighted to have been a part of the future of this school and I'll continue to make things better for everyone if it's at all possible because after all the children deserve the best treatment and education that we can give."

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SCHOOL

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10am–1pm**

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This is a very relaxed event which will give you a true flavour of life here. However, if you cannot make the Open Morning, please don't worry: just call Claire on **01642 558119** to arrange an individual visit.

Ken James
Headmaster

AN EDUCATION
ENJOYED



At Red House we are very proud of our:

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- + Unique family atmosphere
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E claire.bellerby@redhouseschool.co.uk

MICHAEL GRAHAMSLAW MEETS

CHRIS JOHNSON

Head Teacher at Argyle House School, Sunderland

What was your background prior to joining Argyle House School?

I graduated with a degree in environmental science before subsequently qualifying as a teacher.

What do you feel have been your major achievements at the school?

There's been various accomplishments recently which I'm particularly proud of. In addition to updating our facilities and increasing our wider partnership links, we've also devised new curriculums with our pupils in mind which feature extra GCSE subjects. Perhaps most impressively, we also attained the highest possible rating by ISI (Independent Schools Inspectorate) in our most recent inspection. There's certainly much to enthuse about!

Can you highlight some key student accomplishments over the past 12 months?

Over the previous year a number of students have really excelled in their sporting endeavours with notable examples including two brothers who claimed gold in Gymnastics and a young female student who represented Great Britain in Karate.

What do you consider to be the most important aspect of education?

I think Argyle House School is a unique educational environment where children come willingly to learn. We consider the happiness of the children to be the key factor in both academic and social success. Offering the children a broad based education enables them to develop and extend areas of strengths and interest. We emphasise that education is something to be enjoyed and must allow the children to develop not just academically but also socially, emotionally and physically.

What are the core beliefs of Argyle House?

We encourage children to be resourceful, resilient, respectful, responsible, reflective and to possess the ability to reason. This is achieved through the dedication of our teaching staff, smaller class sizes and the quality of the facilities available to students.

How much emphasis do you place on extra-curricular activities?

We believe that extra-curricular activities are crucial to the development of the child. Our numerous clubs and activities are far-ranging and we often have over twenty running at any one time.

What positive changes have you seen in education generally during your tenure?

It's been nice to witness positive changes to the exam system which has made things a lot fairer for students.

What changes would you like to see going forward?

I'd like to see all issues with the government resolved before any further changes are put into place.

Where do you see yourself and the school in five years time?

I hope I'll be at Argyle House continuing the great work we're currently carrying out. I also wish to further increase the facilities on offer.

Away from the school, how do you like to relax?

Spending time with my family takes up a large chunk of my time and I especially enjoy watching my boys play football. In addition to this, I can often be found swimming or walking the dogs.





RGS NEWCASTLE ANNOUNCES NEW HEAD

Royal Grammar School Newcastle has announced its successor to retiring Headmaster, Dr Bernard Trafford.

Following a national recruitment process, Paul Walker (Chair of Governors) has announced that John Fern will take over the reins of the North East's leading independent school from September 2017.

Speaking of John's appointment, Paul Walker said, 'We're delighted to have appointed John Fern as the successor to Dr. Bernard Trafford at RGS.

'We are confident that John will continue to drive the school forward and maintain the great work that is carried out across the school to ensure it remains as one of the leading independent schools in the country.'

John is currently Deputy Head at King Edward's School, Birmingham, which itself is a highly regarded school within the UK. Being the flagship of the Foundation of the Schools of King Edward VI, it is of a similar age and lineage to the RGS and is one of the truly great ancient grammar schools founded in the 16th century.

John has been an instrumental part of King Edward's modernisation which they have done with great dynamism in past years, and he'll bring enormous acumen and experience to his new role here in Newcastle.

Commenting on his appointment, John said, 'I am delighted and honoured to be appointed Headmaster at RGS. It is a truly great school and one which the city deserves and needs.

'I look forward to working with everyone there; staff, students and parents to build on the work and legacy of Dr Bernard Trafford in ensuring that it remains such a thriving and successful school.'

The whole of the RGS Newcastle family is looking forward to welcoming John to the North East and steering the school through its next phase of life.

www.rgs.newcastle.sch.uk



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MOTOR DEALER GROUP MARKS 18 YEARS OF SUPPORT TO THE SALVATION ARMY'S CHRISTMAS PRESENT APPEAL



Major Mark Dooley of The Salvation Army with Nas Khan, Managing Director of Jennings Motor Group.

2016 marked the 18th consecutive year Jennings Motor Group has supported The Salvation Army's Christmas Present Appeal.

The celebration got underway with a gift donation to the charity's annual appeal.

It all began in 1998 when Jennings solely operated Ford dealerships and the company forged a partnership with The Salvation Army by agreeing to use its branch network as drop off and collection points for gift donations for the charity's annual Christmas Present Appeal.

The campaign, in its 37th year, was set up with the aim of providing gifts to the most vulnerable people in the region who would not normally receive a gift on Christmas Day.

Over the years, as the Jennings' business has grown and developed with the launch of new dealerships, additional marques and new business ventures, demand for The Salvation Army to support more people in the community at Christmas time, has also increased.

Operating more than 40 corps (churches) and community projects across the North East, puts The Salvation Army in a unique position in understanding where the community needs vital support.

Major Mark Dooley (Gateshead Salvation Army church leader) said: "Families can find themselves in tough financial situations and that can be very difficult at Christmas, struggling to make ends

meet but wanting to take part in celebrations.

"As a Christian church and charity, we're inspired by the hope that comes from the Christmas story and feel that by providing a small gift for families in need we can share that hope and remind people, as they face those difficult circumstances, that they are valued and cared for.

"We're so grateful to people who have donated a brand new toy for a child and for the great support of Jennings Motor Group who have been busy collecting to support us."

To mark the 2016 appeal, Jennings Motor Group's managing director, Nas Khan, presented gifts to Major Mark Dooley from The Salvation Army, at the company's Ford dealership at Eslington Park in Gateshead.

Nas said: "We are absolutely delighted to have been able to support The Salvation Army with another appeal and to be celebrating 18 years of support is fantastic.

"They do an amazing job supporting people within the community, not just at Christmas time, but all year round.

"Christmas time, however, is the most difficult and challenging time as they have thousands of people they need to assist in order to make their Christmas extra special."

As in previous years, staff, customers and members of the public showed their support by donating a

variety of gifts, including toys for children and gifts for teenagers, gifts for the elderly, non-perishable food items and confectionery items.

Nas added: "We always get a good response from staff, customers and members of the public who want to do their bit by helping the most vulnerable in society."

As a company committed to supporting charities and the local community, 2016 also saw Jennings Motor Group supporting The Great North Air Ambulance Service (GNAAS), after nominating the charity at the beginning of the year and pledging to raise as much money as possible over a 12-month period.

The charity provides air ambulance services across the North of England, including the North East, North Yorkshire and Cumbria.

As well as staff taking part in a variety of fundraising activities at individual dealerships, the motor dealer group also donated a brand new Kia Rio for the charity's annual car raffle.

The car raffle was a phenomenal success and raised in excess of £100,000 for the charity.

Jennings Motor Group operates Ford dealerships based at Gateshead, Stockton and Middlesbrough, two Kia dealerships at Stockton and Washington, a Mazda, SEAT and Mitsubishi dealership also in Middlesbrough, in addition to two Harley-Davidson dealerships in Gateshead and Leeds, as well as a SUBWAY® store in Stockton.

For more information about The Salvation Army and the services they provide, visit www.salvationarmy.org.uk/

To find out more about The Great North Air Ambulance Service, visit www.greatnorthairambulance.co.uk

Information about the range of products and services available at Jennings Motor Group, can be found at www.jenningsmotorgroup.co.uk



OUT & ABOUT - GLASGOW

Stationmaster Alex Nelson has been suggesting places to go by train each month and for January, he takes a look around Glasgow.

For a winter warmer city short break, it's hard to beat Glasgow at this time of year. In January and February, advance rail fares are at their lowest, and there's an incredible choice of interesting places to visit. From the North East, Cross Country Trains run direct into Glasgow Central, or you can use the regular Virgin Trains services into Edinburgh and Scotrail from there to Glasgow Queen Street. A third alternative is to use the Northern stopping service into Carlisle and Virgin Trains West Coast into Glasgow Central where you could stay at the Grand Central Hotel in the City Centre.

Glasgow has many attractions but my personal favourites are the Glasgow Subway and the buildings of Charles Rennie Mackintosh, the famous architect (1868 - 1928). Scotland Street School tells the story of state education through the 19th and 20th centuries in one of Mackintosh's celebrated buildings, right opposite the Shields Road subway station. The subway opened in 1896 as a 6.5 mile circular route. The track gauge is 4 foot so the orange subway cars are quite small, and they run either on the clockwise outer loop

or the anticlockwise inner loop. It takes just under half an hour to get round, and, as my wife says, it's the best way to see Glasgow! Not because you are underground all the time, but because you can leave the Subway at any of the 15 stations and find something of interest. Many of the museums are free, such as the Riverside Museum featuring transport and technology which is ten minutes from Partick station (National Rail and Subway). If football is your interest, get off at Ibrox station for the Rangers stadium, and tours are also available at Celtic on the other side of the city at Parkhead.

I used to enjoy staying at the Swallow Hotel on the Paisley Road (between Ibrox and Cessnock subway stations), which became more run down when the Vaux group was broken up and finally closed. After an impressive full refurbishment of all 117 rooms, it has been reopened by the Crerar Hotels group as their only urban hotel. Trip Advisor rates it as the 11th best hotel (of 95) in Glasgow, and being out of the centre rates are competitive, especially so on Thursday and Sunday nights. Search for Go Glasgow Urban Hotel. If you do stay there, you will be well placed across the road from the Glasgow

Climbing Centre in an old church. You can watch people climbing on ropes to dizzy heights whilst sipping a coffee in the Balcony Café. Also close by is Bellahouston Park where one of Charles Rennie Mackintosh's buildings is situated. He designed this for a "House for an Art Lover" competition in 1901, although it wasn't built in the park until well after his death and eventually opened in 1996.

Hillhead in the West End is another useful stop, Kelvinbridge too, and a day ticket on the Subway costs only £4 as a paper ticket (not on a smart card), and at Hillhead you can see two Subways opposite one another: the sandwich shop on one side and the underground railway station on the other, a short walk from the interesting Botanic Gardens. The main shopping streets are Argyle Street, Sauchiehall Street and Buchanan Street, and to the east is the Merchant City cultural quarter.

Beyond that is the well-regarded St. Mungo Museum of Religious Life and Art, set in Scottish baronial style buildings, and named after the patron saint of Glasgow. Like many museums in the City, it is free to enter, a reason so many people visit Glasgow!

Alex Nelson, Chester-le-Track trades at Chester-le-Street station (0191 387 1387) and Eaglescliffe (01642 200140). To contact Alex, phone/text 07860 953981 any reasonable time. www.nationalrail.com. For National Rail Enquiries call 24hr 08457 484950



Edinburgh. ©iStock

Wherever we venture, be it close to home or in distant foreign climes, what the modern traveller craves most are memorable moments and experiences to collect and share when they return home. Whether that's the best steak on the planet, a rare vintage wine, a stunning sunset over staggering scenery or a private moment with your favourite piece of art in a museum after-hours, those defining moments are often what remain with us for a lifetime.

Unique travel moments and tailor-made itineraries are now the name of the game in luxury travel. Individual, exclusive, behind-the-scenes experiences, and all with a personal touch, are what the time-starved, 21st Century luxury traveller demands.

And we don't just want this level of attention in our personal holidays. Business travellers also want to make the most of time spent on the road, extending their stay to see more than the inside of a conference centre. Organisations also want to 'wow' their clients and reward their staff with experiences you can't just buy off the shelf.

It's no wonder then that the travel concierge business is booming and that some Destination Management Companies both at home and internationally are very much focused on this high-end, high-touch delivery of travel itineraries to cater for this growing market.

Travel Bureau Destinations is one such company based right here in the North-East. Travel Bureau opened its doors on Gosforth High Street in 1961 and has been sending leisure and business travellers overseas on tailor-made itineraries and business trips for over 55 years'. Proud of its North-East heritage, and of the

diverse attractions and beautiful countryside and coastline the region offers, it seemed only natural to want to show this off to those visiting the UK, combining it with their first-hand experience of the luxury travel sector.

With this in mind, Travel Bureau Destinations was launched in June 2016 as a UK DMC for domestic and inbound visitors, focused on delivering bespoke VIP experiences across the region and beyond. It's already being noticed, having been selected by American Express as a preferred travel supplier for its 'Crafted Journeys' programme - providing bespoke travel options for International Centurion cardmembers

"The beauty of Northumberland, history of County Durham and the thriving cultural scene of Newcastle-Gateshead make the North-East a special part of the UK that is often overlooked by inbound visitors, and we are excited to introduce more guests to its delights, said Jeanne Lally joint managing director of Travel Bureau Destinations.

"In fact, the whole of the UK has a wealth of exceptional experiences to offer travellers that you simply can't discover anywhere else. Our itineraries are tailored to the specific desires of each individual client based on extensive local knowledge,

industry contacts and partner relationships, along with the travel expertise to make it happen.

"A private tour of a gallery with a historian on hand to bring the collection to life; a unique moment for your conference guests to savour like the 'blinking' of the Millennium Bridge over the Tyne; or dinner with a Duchess or an Earl who can give a compelling insight into their historic family seat; these are the experiences we can offer," added Jeanne.

Three years in the making, Travel Bureau Destinations is the 'local expert' and their team always have their ear to the ground making sure that clients never miss the latest 'must see' opportunities. Extensive research means they recommend the finest restaurants, new hotels and attractions and can open doors that often say 'private'. All the practicalities are taken care of, from organising transport and overcoming language and cultural barriers for international customers.

So, if you plan to delve deeper into our green and pleasant land on your next stay-cation or want visiting business clients to experience the beating heart of your region there are exceptional moments across the UK just waiting to be discovered.



Hadrian's Wall. ©Visit Britain



Colourful houses, Eyeries, Beara, Co. Cork.
© Chris Hill Photographic



Bath. ©Visit Britain



Quayside, Newcastle. ©Visit England



London. ©iStock



The Bowes Museum, Barnard Castle, County Durham, England, UK. ©Visit Britain



Cliffs of Mohar, Ireland. ©Content Pool



Ascot. ©Visit Britain

NEWCASTLE AIRPORT MEANS BUSINESS. THEY'RE WELL CONNECTED!



When travel and business mix, it's very easy for things to turn sour very quickly. That's why everyone at Newcastle International Airport is focused on making your arrival, transit and departure as efficient and smooth as possible.

It doesn't matter whether it is the convenience of being able to park within a short walk of the terminal or whisking quickly through security to your flight, (98 per cent of passengers get through security within 6 minutes. Wow? Beat that Heathrow) or the opportunity to relax in comfortable surroundings with excellent facilities; everything is geared to make your journey as simple and pain free as possible. There's even valet parking. Roll-up outside the main terminal, hop out of your car, and let the valet attendants take your car to a secure parking area. They'll wash and polish it too if you fancy returning to a shiny, clean car!

If you are travelling with colleagues, why not begin your meeting in one of the airport lounges. There are wifi facilities, desks, quiet areas, printers... everything you may need to get your business trip off to a flyer.

However, not only is Newcastle Airport good at doing business, they're also extremely well connected.

Newcastle International Airport is one of the UK's leading regional airports, but the clue to just how convenient the airport can be is found in the word 'international'.

One choice is to hop onto the frequent British Airways service to Heathrow and continue onto your destination, more than likely, via Terminal 5.

Emirates is one of the world's youngest airlines (founded in 1985) but it's already the world's leading operator of the Boeing 777 which is the aircraft they use on their daily Newcastle to Dubai route. Once you arrive in Dubai, the world is your

oyster. Dubai has rapidly become one of the top hubs for world travel and the good news is that Emirates codeshares with airlines (Qantas for example) to Australia, New Zealand and Asia.

Closer to home, KLM feeding into Schiphol at Amsterdam and Air France which flies into Charles de Gaulle in Paris, are two more hubs to other destinations.

But, Newcastle International Airport is spreading its wings.

There are regular flights to destinations like Barcelona, Madrid, Brussels, Düsseldorf, Dublin, Prague, Copenhagen, Warsaw, Stavanger, Kraków and Geneva with recognised airlines such as Aer Lingus, BMI, EasyJet, Eurowings, Ryanair, SAS and Vueling. Each airline and each destination offers easy, quick and cost-effective transfers to domestic and international routes.

However, it is very easy to purely concentrate on facilities and connections for those who are flying out of the North East to conduct business in Europe and further afield. What about those people who are flying into the region? First impressions are important and that is why Newcastle International Airport aims to make visitors feel welcome and, importantly, impressed with what they see and hear. They want a courteous, efficient and business-like experience as soon as they land. They want to make sure that any potential business meetings get off on the right foot.

And here's something you don't get at any other airport. Leon McQuaid is the Aviation Development Manager at Newcastle International Airport. Leon has been in the airline industry for more years

than he'd admit, but as anybody in business will confirm, you're never too old to learn. If you think Newcastle could do with a link to another airport or destination...sensible reasons only please...then fling an email in Leon's direction. He'd love to hear from you and discuss the thinking behind your reasons.

Newcastle International Airport is growing in popularity. Ryanair for example is adding an additional eleven new routes next year. There are more and more destinations to Poland. There are new or more frequent flights to Faro, Gerona and Palma. In the summer there will be additional or new flights to Gdansk, Lanzarote, Tenerife, Warsaw and Kraków.

And of course, you need to mix business with a bit of pleasure. Jet2, Thomson and Thomas Cook have more options than you can shake a Filofax at to help soothe that furrowed brow.

Seriously though, the guys at Newcastle International Airport have a message for you. This is your airport. They want to be in a partnership with you.

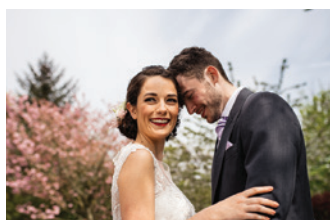
If you feel as though they can help your business experience...either with your flight out or clients flying in...they really would value your feedback.

So, there you go, the gauntlet has been thrown down. Newcastle International Airport means business. They want to connect with you and help you connect with the rest of the UK, Europe and the World. Business is all about connections. The airport is all about connections.

Together, we can fly.

Oh, and if you want to contact Leon, email him on lmcquaid@newcastleinternational.co.uk

LUMLEY CASTLE - NO ORDINARY HOTEL



Standing proud for more than 600 years, the magnificent Lumley Castle Hotel dominates the County Durham landscape. Surrounded by beautiful parklands overlooking the River Wear and Durham County Cricket Ground, Lumley Castle Hotel is a magnificent monument to a bygone age of chivalry and honour.

Offering an exciting blend of heritage and splendour, superb food and outstanding service will make your day one to cherish and remember forever.

Extraordinary Surroundings

Lumley Castle Hotel creates an enchanting backdrop for photographers to capture unforgettable moments. Boasting nine acres of parkland with exquisite outside areas, perfect to host a drinks reception where guests can enjoy champagne and canapes.

Tying the Knot

Lumley Castle is licensed to hold Civil Ceremonies

and Civil Partnerships. From an intimate wedding of 2 to 132 the opulent state rooms provide the ideal ambience to make a lifelong promise.

Phenomenal Feasts

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Imagine a Hotel where every room is different. Where each room is filled with historical artefacts

and special touches, where you may find a four-posted bed, or perhaps a bathroom hidden behind a wardrobe or a bookcase. Lumley Castle has 73 bedrooms each individual as the next, the best way to end a momentous day.



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AWARD WINNING COMEDY HEADS TO NEWCASTLE THEATRE ROYAL

Well known faces from British comedy are set to take to the stage as the Olivier Award-winning *Out of Order* directed by playwright Ray Cooney heads to Newcastle Theatre Royal (22 – 27 May 2017).

Arthur Bostrom, best known for his iconic role as Officer Crabtree in classic sitcom 'Allo 'Allo, joins the cast as the Hotel Manager, alongside Shaun Williamson (*EastEnders*) as George Pigden, Sue Holderness (*Only Fools & Horses*) as Mrs Willey, Andrew Hall (*Coronation Street*) as Richard Willey and Susie Amy (*Footballers' Wives*) as Jane Worthington.

When Tory Junior Minister Richard Willey tries to spend the evening with Jane, one of the Opposition's secretaries, in the Westminster Hotel, things don't exactly go according to plan, starting with the discovery of a body trapped in the hotel's only unreliable sash window. Enlisting the help of his hapless private secretary George Pigden, Willey's sticky situation goes from bad to worse. With the arrival of Jane's distraught young husband, an unscrupulous waiter, Mrs Willey and Nurse Foster, things really come to a head!

Ray Cooney's credits include *Run for Your Wife*, *Caught in the Net* and *It Runs in the Family*. He said: "Having directed my Olivier Award-Winning play in London and all over the world, and hearing all that wonderful raucous laughter from audiences, it has become one of my favourite plays. I've updated it to present day and, fortunately, the basic premise of a philandering MP is as likely today as it was when the play was originally written!"

Out of Order is produced by Tom O'Connell Productions, with design by Rebecca Brower, lighting by Jack Weir, sound by James Nicholson and casting by Marc Frankum CDG.

Tickets are available from £14.50 and can be purchased from the Theatre Royal Box Office or online.

NORTH SHIELDS CULTURE HUB GAINS CHARITABLE STATUS

A new cultural arts destination in North Tyneside has been awarded charitable status by the Charity Commission after a 3-month bid assisted by Jesmond-based accountants Robson Laidler.

The Exchange North Tyneside Limited, housed within a stunning grade II listed building on Howard Street, offers space and networking opportunities for the arts and cultural sector.

As a result of the new charitable status, The Exchange can now claim tax back on donations towards its future development and also apply for various charitable rate reliefs, gift aid and charitable grants.

The charity can now deliver even more projects alongside already successful events such as, theatre performances, monthly art exhibitions, youth drama and musical theatre clubs, baby and toddler story adventure groups, live music, poetry readings and open mic sessions.

Artistic Director at The Exchange Karen Knox said: "Thanks to Robson Laidler, we now have the ability to make donations go further, either by getting tax relief on them or claiming it back through gift aid. Now that we have been granted a charitable status we can improve facilities, equipment and funding to support and benefit creativity in North Tyneside."



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LATEST CELEBRITIES ANNOUNCED FOR STRICTLY TOUR

Former Shadow Chancellor Ed Balls, sports presenter Ore Oduba and actress Lesley Joseph are the latest celebrities announced to appear on the Strictly Come Dancing Live UK Tour, which returns to the Metro Radio Arena for two performances on 24 January 2017 (2:30pm & 7:30pm).

Ed, Ore and Lesley will join fellow celebrities Louise Redknapp, Danny Mac and Daisy Lowe on the 10th anniversary tour, alongside tour host Anita Rani and the new tour judging panel of Len Goodman, Craig Revel Horwood and Karen Hardy.

Described by many as the 'people's champion', Ed Balls said: "My time on Strictly was incredible. I plan to give it everything I've got for the audiences across the country."

Ore Oduba, BBC Sports presenter, said: "I can't wait to travel the country and meet the fantastic audience that made our whole experience possible."

Lesley Joseph, best known for playing Dorian Green in the popular television series Birds of a Feather, said: "I'm getting ready to put my dancing shoes back on and hit the dance floor again!"

Tickets costing from £35.00 are available online, from the booking hotline number 0844 493 6666 or in person from the Metro Radio Arena Box Office.

RECORD OF THE MONTH - JOHN LEGEND 'DARKNESS & LIGHT'



DARKNESS AND LIGHT
JOHN LEGEND

Hot on the heels of his spellbinding performance at the MetroRadio Arena in December, the pop superstar's 5th studio album simply had to feature as our record of the month. Overseen by Alabama Shakes' producer Blake Mills, Darkness & Light features 12 new tracks including the singles 'Love Me Now', 'I Know Better' and 'Penthouse Floor', the latter of which features a notable guest turn from Chance The Rapper. Lyrically he veers between the romantic and the polemic whilst other collaborations feature tracks with fellow R&B artist Miguel and the Shakes' lead vocalist Brittany Howard. Unlike 2013's Love in the Future which was known for a few syrupy moments in places, this album features a series of icy, experimental soundscapes and textures which marks something of a change in direction for Legend. An ordinary person maybe but an extraordinary set of songs.

What's on this January?

Mini Mayfair

January 7

Newcastle City Hall T: (0844) 8112 121
www.newcastlecityhall.org

Jack Whitehall

January 13

Sunderland Empire T: (0191) 566 1040
www.atgtickets.com

Cathy

January 16-17

Northern Stage T: (0191) 230 5151
www.northernstage.co.uk

The Play That Goes Wrong

January 17-21

Newcastle Theatre Royal T: (0844) 8112 121
www.theatreroyal.co.uk

The Unexpected Guest

January 17-21

The People's Theatre T: (0191) 265 5020
www.peopletheatre.co.uk

The Dressing Room

January 19

The Custom's House T: (0191) 454 1234
www.customhouse.co.uk

John Shuttleworth

January 20

Tyne Theatre T: (0844) 2491 000
www.tynetheatreandoperahouse.uk

Simply Dylan

January 20

Whitley Bay Playhouse T: (0844) 248 1588
www.playhousewhitleybay.co.uk

Dirty Dancing

January 23-28

Newcastle Theatre Royal T: (0844) 8112 121
www.theatreroyal.co.uk

Strictly Come Dancing Live Tour

January 24

MetroRadio Arena T: (0844) 493 6666
www.metroradioarena.co.uk

King Creosote

January 25

Sage Gateshead T: (0191) 443 4661
www.sagegateshead.com

The Simon & Garfunkel Story

January 26

Whitley Bay Playhouse T: (0844) 248 1588
www.playhousewhitleybay.co.uk

Each Piece

January 27-28

Live Theatre Newcastle T: (0191) 232
www.live.org.uk

Transit

January 27-28

Northern Stage T: (0191) 230 5151
www.northernstage.co.uk



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NEW YEAR NEW ART!



Welcome to 2017 everyone! A brand new year awaits us and we wish everyone huge luck in achieving their plans and goals throughout the year. As we kick the year off I would like you to have a good look at the existing artwork you have in your office – if you even have any. Do you think it suits the message you are trying to promote to your clients and your staff? If it doesn't then it's time to think about something new.

"I don't know what I want, I just want something nice"

These are the words we sometimes hear from our business clients, so we solve their problem by having a good discussion, providing some ideas, and some rough costs. After that we contact suitable artists, who then give a rough price for completing your piece. All you need to do from there is select the artistic style you like and order some rough sketches with ideas for your specific project – we charge £15 per black & white rough sketch and £30 for a colour so it's very cheap way of getting some ideas for how you might visualize your artwork! You then decide which idea you prefer and the artist can tweak it if necessary and of course create the final piece for you. There is absolutely no commitment to go for the full commission even after the sketches until you have clearly stipulated the artist and have paid.

Remember – we are experienced!

As we stride ahead into our 8th year in business, and with hundreds of commissions under our belt, we are here to help you. We can steer you properly through the process of commissioning some artwork and you have our full support. You can contact us at any time and we proactively manage the commission for you to ensure it gets done. In addition, your funds are stored in our secure escrow account until the artwork has been completed.

It's going to cost a fortune!

No it's not! Our prices start at £200 for an item of artwork. We have many different grades of artists, who all differ in talent and experience. You could pay upwards of £5,000 for a piece of artwork and we have the artists who can provide that for you, or you could use one of our new graduates who tend to charge less as they are looking to build up their portfolio of commission – we have something for everyone and we almost always provide options for artwork within your budget.



Themed Artwork

We provide sets of artwork for you to place around your office, or home. So, we could take a particular theme which is in common with your business and/or industry and run a series. Again, this doesn't have to cost a fortune. We are lucky today as we can do a lot of artwork digitally and printed out, which significantly reduces the cost for you or you could have a mix of digital and paint/crayon/other materials. There are lots of options! Please click on this link to view our previous work: www.commissionanartist.co.uk/themed-artwork

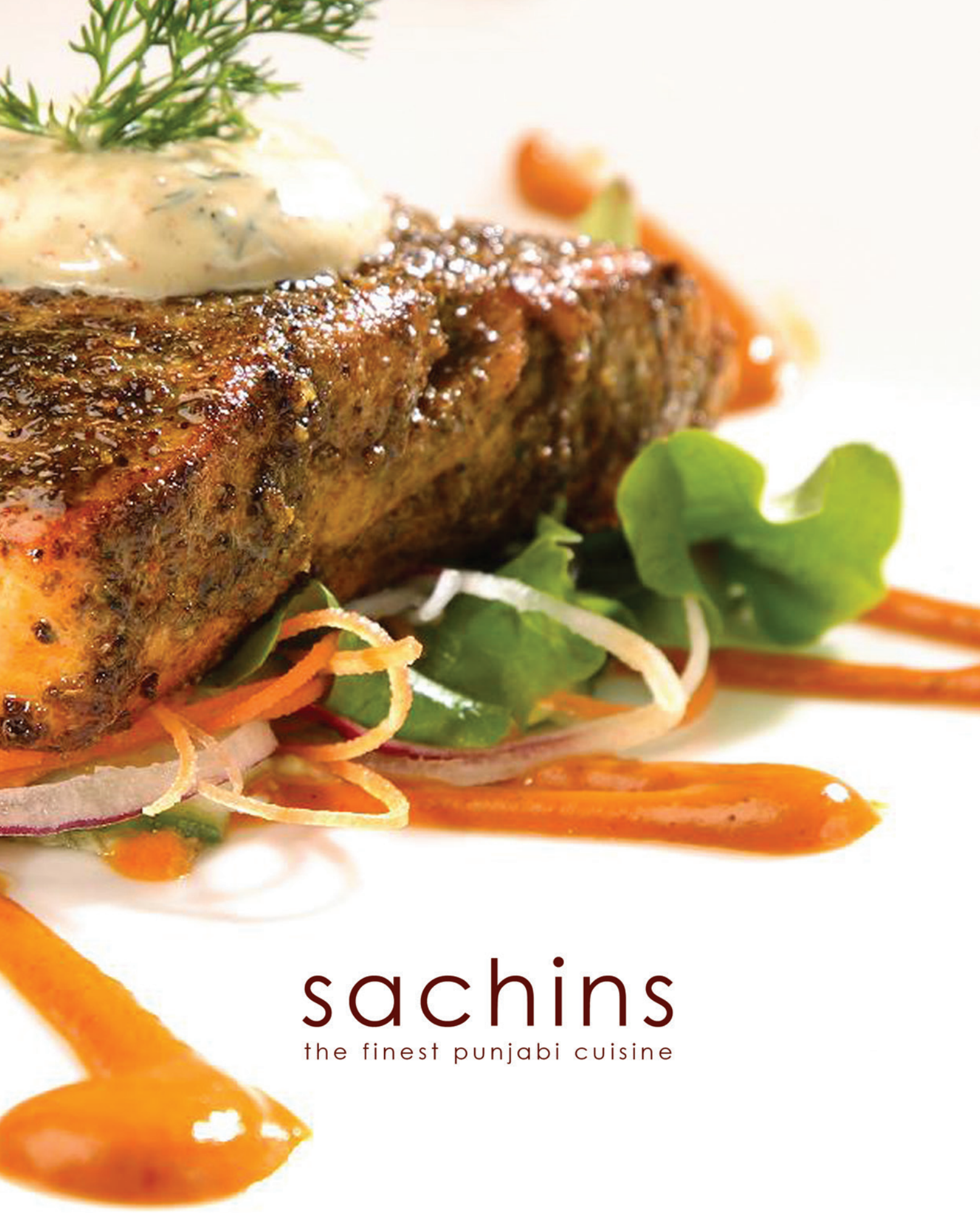
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SPECIALISTS STEP UP TO OFFER REVOLUTIONARY SHOCKWAVE THERAPY



A revolutionary therapy is being offered in Newcastle thanks to an innovative partnership between physiotherapy practice **Physiotherapy Matters** and chiropody and podiatry specialist **Newcastle Foot Clinic**.

The health specialists have joined forces to offer extracorporeal shockwave therapy (ESWT) to a wide range of patients in the North East who suffer from chronic and painful musculoskeletal conditions. In the past, this treatment has only been available to professional athletes.

ESWT is a non-invasive, specialist treatment that works by passing a very low energy shockwave through the affected area, helping to initiate a healing response. The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) has recommended it as an effective treatment option for a number of conditions including plantar fasciitis, achilles tendinopathy, greater trochanteric pain syndrome, tennis elbow and calcific shoulder tendinitis.

The ESWT is performed using the state-of-the-art Swiss Dolorcast Master, a radial

shock wave therapy machine, on which the teams at both Physiotherapy Matters and Newcastle Foot Clinic are fully-trained. The treatment typically consists of 3-4 sessions and is routinely offered alongside a rehabilitation program.

Launched in 2006, Physiotherapy Matters' qualified industry professionals deliver pioneering physiotherapy, acupuncture and injection treatments across the full range of musculoskeletal injuries and diseases.

Established in 2003, Newcastle Foot Clinic specialises in chiropody and podiatry services such as orthotics and biomechanical assessments, treating a range of lower limb and foot ailments.

Neeraj Nayyar, Managing Director of Physiotherapy Matters, said: "We are delighted to be partnering with Newcastle Foot Clinic to give our patients access to this revolutionary technology. We feel that we can make a real difference to people suffering from many different ailments which can have a detrimental effect on their daily lives."

100 MILESTONE MARK REACHED BY NE1 NEWCASTLE RESTAURANT WEEK

The date has been set for January's NE1 Newcastle Restaurant Week, a hugely popular event in Newcastle's event calendar for all Northern foodies. From 16th– 22nd January, NE1 will be hosting the 13th NE1 Newcastle Restaurant Week and will celebrate a major milestone in the event's six-year history as it welcomes over 100 restaurants to take part.

The rising number of participants mirrors the growth of the city's restaurant scene; 24 new restaurants are to open in the new intu Eldon Square Grey's Quarter alone and Newcastle currently offers more restaurants per square foot than any other Northern city.

Among the sign-ups are brands new to the city including Chaophraya and the newly launched Dobson and Parnell, the latest venture from award winning restaurateur, Andy Hook. Newcastle diners and food lovers will be given the opportunity to try out these new venues for only £10 or £15 per head.

The event continues to grow in popularity and status year on year. At the last count, over 350,000 diners had taken part in NE1 Newcastle Restaurant Week since its launch in January 2011 with over 40,000 dining during last August's Restaurant Week alone.



NEWCASTLE TO SEE RETURN OF UNIQUE 130FT HIGH RESTAURANT

Tyneside diners are set to see their taste buds taken to another level this August – As Newcastle in the Sky returns to the city bigger – and higher than before.

Last year saw guests at the unique 'skytable' hoisted 100ft in the air above Gateshead Quays' Performance square, where they sampled dishes from some of Newcastle's favourite restaurants.

However for 2017, Newcastle in the Sky is upping the ante, with more flights over additional days, and a 30ft increase in height meaning that daredevil diners will be suspended 130ft above the Stephenson Quarter – twice as high as the Angel of the North.

Jacqui McKirdy, the brains behind last year's Made in Tyne and Wear lifestyle award finalist event – says it was an easy decision to bring it back for another year.

"When we ran last year's event, it was only planned as a one-off. But almost straight after it finished it's run, we were getting a lot of emails asking when's it returning and how can we get involved again next year.

"Even during the event we had people coming off the sky table asking about next year and it got me thinking let's do it again."

The 2017 edition of Newcastle in the Sky will see a few familiar faces returning, with Hawthorns, Brown's and The Gin Bar coming back for a second year and other chefs to be announced in due course.



Hawthorns head Chef Chris Wood says he was more than happy to get on board.

"Last year was brilliant, it was definitely one of the strangest more unique places I've cooked and it was really enjoyable. It was a no-brainer to return. It's not every day you get asked to ply your trade 100ft in the air."



FISH AND CHIP SHOP SET TO BATTER COMPETITION

Sixty two years of hard work, spanning three generations of the Oxenham family, has seen Clems Fish Restaurants reach the final three in the Best Multiple Fish and Chip Operator category in the National Fish and Chip Awards 2017.

To secure a place in the final three, Clems has been appraised across a wide range of judging criteria, including menu development, fish sourcing policies and supplier relationships.

Industry experts will carry out mystery visits and assessments in the upcoming weeks until the restaurant chain finds out its fate at the award ceremony in London on 26th January.

The first Clems restaurant was opened in 1954 by Jane and Clem Oxenham in Spennymoor. The company now employs over 80 staff. With three generations of the family currently involved in the business, Clems has expanded to four more outlets in Chester le Street, Shildon, Bishop Auckland and Sunderland.

THREE AWARDS IN THREE WEEKS FOR SEAHAM HALL

Five-star Seaham Hall hotel has recently snapped up three prestigious awards.

The string of awards included the Readers' Award at the Condé Nast Johansens Awards for Excellence as well as the Best Spa in the North East at the Good Spa Guide 2016 Awards.

Seaham Hall was also awarded Best five-star hotel and spa, with a rating of 90.48, in the Trivago Awards' Top Hotels in the North East, resulting from 175 million aggregated hotel reviews.

Seaham Hall's Managing Director, Ross Grieve, said: "We are overjoyed to receive these great accolades. We're all very passionate about what we do and proud of what we have achieved as a team."

Following a £3M refurbishment, Seaham Hall, a boutique hotel with just 21 suites, features two restaurants and 37 acres of blissful grounds. Additional current accolades include Spa Manager of the Year in the Boutique Hotelier Awards and Gold in 'Small Hotel of the Year' at the North East England Tourism Awards.



GISBOROUGH HALL BECOMES AN INDEPENDENT HOTEL

Gisborough Hall has announced multi-million-pound investment plans as it prepares to become a fully-independent, family-owned hotel.

Lord Gisborough and his family, supported by a newly-appointed board of directors, will take full commercial control of Gisborough Hall, which is currently a Macdonald Associate hotel, from April 2017.

This will allow for further investment at Gisborough Hall including a new spa which it's hoped will be open by the end of the year. The hotel, made up of over 100 local employees,

has become one of the most successful and prestigious hotels in the North of England with a range of accolades.

Highly regarded for launching Rockliffe Hall, Nick Holmes has been appointed Non-Executive Director to aid transition and support future spa and leisure proposals.

Four-star Gisborough Hall is home to two AA Rosette restaurant Chaloner's, a Revival Zone spa, 71 bedrooms and G Bar and Bistro, as well as a ballroom, conservatory and events spaces and a traditional drawing room.



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STYLE AND SUBSTANCE?

MICHAEL GRAHAMSLAW VISITS GULSHAN IN TYNEMOUTH, A SUPREMELY STYLISH VENUE. BUT DOES IT BOAST THE FOOD TO MATCH?



Since opening for business in February 2015, Gulshan Indian restaurant has really spiced up the Tynemouth culinary circuit. Set in a prime location above the Priory Pub, Gulshan occupies the former site of Sonny's Italian and offers a stunning urban vista over Tynemouth at night. Which is even more dazzling at this time of the year. Sailing the ship are brothers Mamzy and Suff, an industrious duo with a wealth of experience who work tirelessly to ensure the best possible customer experiences.

Both clearly possess an eye for interior design as well with the dining area at Gulshan being gorgeously appointed. Shades of rich purple and gold combine with glittering, crystal chandeliers and plush velvet upholstery to create an atmosphere which is deliberately opulent. Trendy exposed brickwork lends an edge whilst some floral Indian wall designs bring authenticity. Gulshan unquestionably emits a certain "WOW factor" upon arrival which I'm sure partly explained the buoyant mid-week footfall.

There's sophistication in spades then, and alas, we soon learnt that they have the menu to go along with it. Featuring old favourites alongside chefs specialities, Gulshan's food offering is extensive and is in keeping with the series of fusions that appear to define the restaurant as a whole; opulent/affordable, contemporary/classic, signature/staple. There's value for money to be found too as all dishes are priced reasonably, whilst there's even a Thursday night 5-course banquet menu - an absolute steal at £13.95.

To begin with there's all your typical Bhaji, Chatt and Pakora starters yet there's also a selection of eye-catching "Tandoori Grilled Starters". These are marinated, skewered then cooked in traditional clay ovens before being nicely seared off on the grill. Well and truly salivating, I went down this route and opted for the Gulshan Kofta, a trademark dish which consisted of Indian meatballs, cooked in a delicately spiced tomato sauce and served with a fresh green salad. My son Jack meanwhile tackled the Bhuna Prawn on Puree; 5 plump King Prawns doused in an onion marinade and served on a pancake. It soon grew apparent that this was well beyond standard Indian fayre. The consistency of the sauces was outstanding and being so elegantly presented, would have been a dream for any Instagram user!

These plates were cleared efficiently and with our palettes now awoken, we moved onto our mains. Jack went for a Chicken Jalfrezi, a sizzling Karai teeming with Chunks of chicken, shards of onion and some evil little green chillies. Feeling

adventurous, I plucked another out of Gulshan's exclusive collection.

Dubbed a "Taste sensation", my Gulshan Chicken Handi was an intensely flavoursome dish containing onions, garlic and ginger and slow cooked on a stove for two hours prior. The dish itself is in the mould of a "staff curry" and was a real revelation for me. It was an unusual item to be found on an Indian restaurant menu and demonstrates just the sort of invention that Gulshan is capable of. A string of other Main Courses including; South Indian Chilli & Garlic Chicken Tikka, Modhu Honey Chicken and Shomudro Seabass were all earmarked for next time. And over coffees we affirmed that there definitely will be a next time!

All in all, Gulshan is a seriously classy venue with sublime food and impeccable service, and all at a very cost-effective price. In this restaurant's case, all that glitters just might be gold!

CHRISTMAS EATS, SHOOTS AND LEAVES...

BY ANDREW FOX, GENERAL MANAGER, CROWNE PLAZA NEWCASTLE

So what was all that about? A year in the planning, a year in the selling and a flash in the happening.

Our second festive season rounded off 2016 in style with party-goers trebling their numbers from last year, albeit whilst we were in infancy. A funny thing happens in hotels around this time of year as we find ourselves catering for an even more eclectic mix of customer profiles than ever.

We had a 2 week period of corporate clients holding their normal strategy days and meetings adjacent to a room full of similar corporates dressed in Christmas jumpers, running around with rubber chickens, doing the time-warp (again) and undertaking the traditional seasonal activity of 'competitive shot downing'. Shots they had never had and will never have again, until the same time this year. I remember hearing once that alcohol sales increase in times of recession or uncertainty due to people either hiding from reality or deciding to go out with a bang. World leaders are doing their very best to keep brewers, vintners and distillers in business.

Also in our festive pot were the weekend B&Bers, 'family visiting' stayers, 'let's get away from the family' stayers, romancers, football watchers, sales shoppers, hardcore 'up all-nighters', post work

socialites and afternoon tea & fizz fans. All good fun.




All this fun added up to about a farm of pigs in blankets being consumed, a great lake of wine and beer being drank and a national bakery (that rhymes with eggs) of mince pies being left on the plate. If that wasn't enough, we stirred the amazing Boiler Shop into the pot. Located opposite the hotel, on South Street, it is truly something special. Aficionados claim it to be the crucible of the industrial revolution with it giving birth to Stephenson Rocket in 1829 and the ensuing railways and bridges all over the world. It will become one of, if not *the* music venue in town and has already featured some unique club nights; another customer type to be catered for.

So Christmas came and went. Here we are in January wondering what do we do now? Ah yes, the proper job, the clear strategy and the consistent operational delivery for the next 11 months. Yes we'll review the customer feedback, how it went behind the scenes and what we will have to do differently this year to hit the targets but one thing is guaranteed, thankfully for the hospitality industry – people will continue to eat, drink shots then leave.

There's joke about a Panda somewhere in there.



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A DIAMOND WITH A NEW SETTING



Paul Holliday has been in charge at the Diamond Public House in Ponteland for many years, over thirty in fact. In that time he's seen many changes to the licensing trade and overseen many innovations of his own devising, in the hostelry.

The Diamond is extremely well known in the North East but like any business, progress means change and Paul is certainly not resistant to altering the fabric of the pub to keep up with trends, "2016 has been a transitional year for us here at the Diamond and 2017 promises to be a highly successful twelve months," he advises, "I've been in post here for 33 years and in that time, I've learned some very hard lessons; It's for that reason, I know the pub must adapt to modern requirements."

Foremost is the creation of a new upstairs 90 cover restaurant which is scheduled to open after Easter in 2017. A restaurant is only as good as the Chef in charge, so Paul searched high and low for the right person to take on the prestigious role and is happy to have found Euan Paterson, who has the right qualifications but mostly the right temperament and outlook, to make the dining experience second to none.

Ponteland itself has 17 dining outlets, which shows

why the right person to oversee food provision is so important. Euan has come into the Diamond and turned everything on its head. Using fresh local produce, he creates dishes of outstanding quality and is committed to developing as time passes.

As a real traditional drinking pub, the Diamond was always looked on with affection in the region but now clientele are looking for something different, an evening or daytime experience with good food, as well as the convivial atmosphere of a real public house occurrence.

Sunday lunch is a case in point and is at present served in the Diamond's existing pub restaurant. Most of us enjoy that relaxing Sunday morning drink followed by a quality lunch. The restaurant is now set up to give customers an unparalleled meal in a relaxing atmosphere.

From a drinks standpoint, the wines served are now provided by Mathew Clark and the pub has a new cocktail menu which suits the younger trade particularly.

As everyone knows, word of mouth is a vital component in the licensed profession, so it's particularly gratifying to Paul, that the reaction by the public to the changes already underway, has been second to none.

The village of Ponteland is an ageing community, which means Paul has to offer a great evening out for what young people there are.

So much for the interior. Paul has plans to create an outdoor venue at the front of the Diamond to further enhance the public house, "It's important to realise too how the licensed trade and the success of the Diamond are contingent on hardworking, diligent staff and my colleagues are just that, it's why I am investing heavily on the right people in the right job. Clientele realise their commitment and come to the pub because of them," Paul goes on.

The changes are comprehensive and the Diamond will adapt to them as time passes.



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Photography: Jonathan Stockton Photography

SUNDAY ON A PLATE



Grahamslaw & Son don their Sunday best and head for Hotel Indigo's Marco Pierre White Steakhouse Bar & Grill in Newcastle.

We recently visited Hotel Indigo's Marco Pierre White Steakhouse for a business lunch, and our experience was so favourable that we vowed to return to sample their Sunday offering. Dubbed "Sunday on a plate", the menu itself offers value for money with 2 courses available for £18.50 and 3 for £21.50 and proved to be just what the Doctor ordered during a period of some serious pre-Christmas overindulgence. Will I ever learn?

The team at MPW have a real knack for conjuring up dishes that are tasty and inventive and have created a Sunday Lunch menu to reflect this. We deliberated for some time over the Cream of Onion Soup and the Chicken & Leek Terrine although we both began with the Salmon Rilette which was topped off by a further slither of salmon and came expertly garnished with tiny nuggets of beetroot and citrus fruits. A thrilling concoction indeed!

Light, full, deep, delicate, zesty and aromatic,

the wine collection at Marco Pierre White is an extensive one. Our friendly waiter Houman was something of an expert and was happy to suggest a chaperone for our forthcoming mains. Little did he know I was taking a crash course in tee-totalling!

These Main Courses took on more of a traditional turn. Jack tucked into the Roast Sirloin of Beef whilst I, feeling its effects but not yet sick of Christmas, went for the festive Turkey Breast. As we knew from our previous visit, meats are cooked to perfection at MPW Newcastle and this occasion was certainly no different. The bird was melt in the mouth tender and Jack's beef arrived the perfect pink. A trendy copper pan-full of seasonal vegetables accompanied both dishes as did a Gravy boat of red wine jus, whilst a smeared flourish of turnip paste added another touch of artistry. Not something you'll find at your local Toby Carvs! And, if all this doesn't appeal, there was a selection of other eye-catching main courses available

including Roast Loin of Pork with Black Pudding, the Pan-Fried Supreme of Salmon with Prawn & Chorizo Risotto and the vegetarian Wild Mushroom & Truffle Penne Pasta.

We rounded off proceedings with coffees and a Chocolate Ganache with Pistachio Ice Cream which I must confess had been winking at me throughout. It would take a stronger man than me to sit impervious to its charms! Having no particular place to go, we did sit for a while to soak up some of the atmosphere. On each of our visits now we've noticed a lively buzz about the place and its little wonder why. MPW Newcastle appears to be a versatile venue which really lends itself to a number of different occasions. Be it Sunday lunch, a celebratory meal, afternoon tea or a business deal-clincher, they deliver with style and substance every time. It certainly made for a truly memorable afternoon, yet thankfully Christmas comes but once a year!

The Caledonian Hotel

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The Packages

Winter packages from £2,200, plus there is a Wedding in a Box offer for £2,995. Or why not go all out - the Deluxe Wedding in a Box all-inclusive package at £5,995 for 60 daytime guests and 100 evening guests?

Acommodation

Why not stay the night before your big day and relax in the Jesmond Suite with three friends? Kick off your celebrations with chocolates, a bottle of prosecco, followed by a tapas-style meal in the bistro and a continental or full English breakfast on the morning of your wedding.

Tailored Day

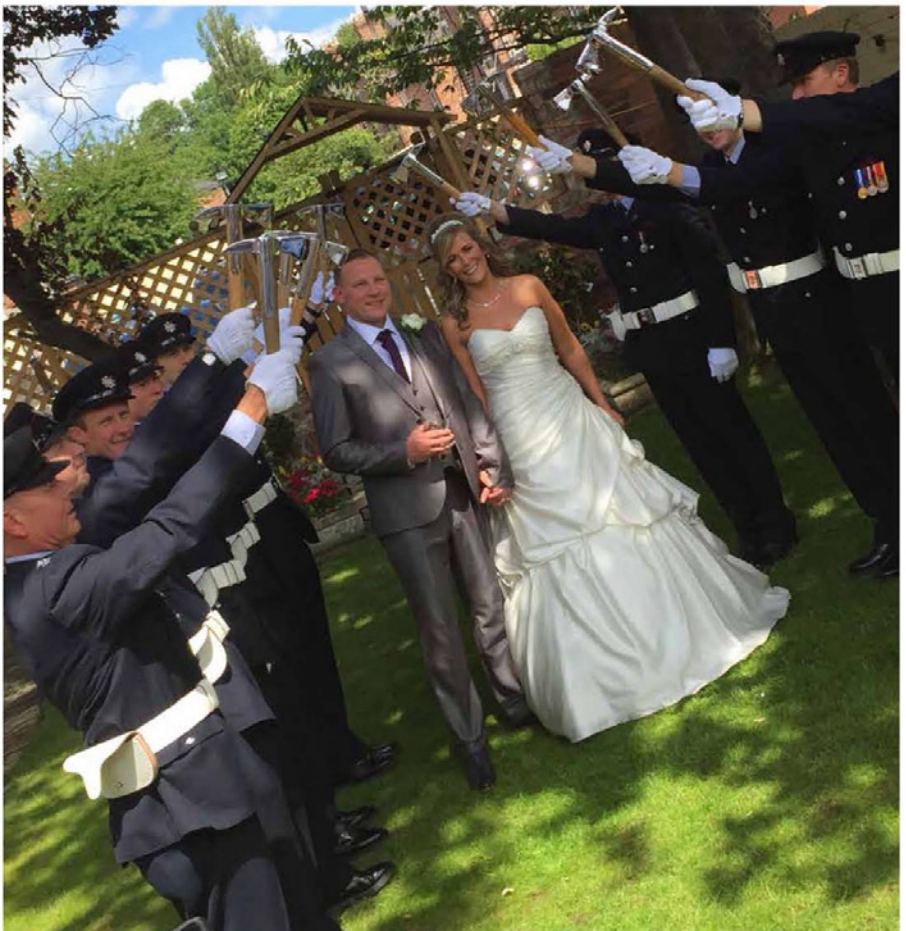
Each and every wedding is individual and different. The wedding coordinator and team not only run your special day, but they also feel proud to be part of it. Enjoy colour-coordinated cocktails with your guests in the beautiful garden, with decking and comfy seating. And with Jesmond Dene only a stone's throw away, it makes for the perfect photo opportunity.

Contact us

The Caledonian Hotel
64 - 68 Osborne Road
Jesmond
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE2 2AT

events@caledonian-hotel-newcastle.com

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BODYGUARDS TOP HEALTH TIPS



HOW TO MAKE A FRESH START

With the start of another year upon us, here are some tips to help you feel like your old self again, only better!

Set some goals.

Avoid indifference next year. Don't procrastinate. Make some choices and then stick to them. What is it you want to achieve in 2017? Understand that to be able to achieve your objectives you'll need to be fit & healthy then create some goals that will allow you to achieve these objectives. Ensure your goals are realistic and achievable then try writing them down and putting them on your fridge or wall as a source of motivation and direction when times get tough in the year ahead.

Get support.

It's always easier to achieve your goals if you surround yourself with people who really care about you. Tell the important people in your life what your goals are and then together, work as a team to ensure you achieve them, helping each other out along the way.

Keep it personal.

A professional, well experienced Personal Trainer will be able to assess where you currently are in terms of health & fitness then provide you with an appropriate exercise and nutritional programme, tailored to your own individual needs.

Think long term and avoid taking short cuts.

True sustainable health comes from a balanced approach to your diet, your exercise routine and your lifestyle. You don't have to become obsessive and rigid, just intelligent and sensible.

Listen to your body.

Your body is constantly talking to you, letting you know when you've done too much or perhaps too little. Your body knows - you just have to listen to it.

Drink more water.

One of the simplest steps to feeling and looking better is to drink more quality mineral water every day. Your body relies heavily on being well hydrated and doesn't function well when it isn't.

Eat Clean.

One of the most important steps is to eat a toxin free, nutritious diet. You are what you eat. Try to predominantly eat unprocessed wholefoods, organic, grassfed, free range when and where possible. Try to firstly place more emphasis on the quality of your foods rather than quantity, shopping more at butchers, greengrocers, fishmongers and farmers markets.

Create some 'Me Time' in your hectic schedule.

Ask yourself 'what do you love to do?' then find a time each week when you can do it. It's all very well working hard to fund your lifestyle and hobbies but if you don't make time to actually pursue your interests then what's the point?

Slow down.

Don't forget that rest and recovery is as important to health as movement and exercise. Ensure you get to bed early as much as possible, slow down your breathing by learning how to meditate or take up something like yoga to learn how to relax.

Detoxify.

After all the indulgence, reboot your system by eliminating all the toxins from your body. Give up alcohol for a month, home-cook all your meals and look after your body for a bit...

When it comes to being healthier, the best piece of advice is to find balance - Try following the 80% rule which states that if you look after your body for 80% of the time, your body will be more than capable of looking after you for the remaining 20%...

Happy New Year from all of us here at Bodyguards Health & Fitness!



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HELPING YOU GET BACK ON TRACK



Ian Holmes had suffered with back pain for over five years and was unable to walk a couple of steps without being in agony. He tells us his story on his journey to recovery:

"I had lower back problems and sciatica for over five years, which made life very difficult for me. I couldn't walk for more than five minutes at a time, the pain was unbearable. I used a Tens machine and took prescribed medication to manage the pain but after five years this no longer had an effect, so I decided something had to be done.

"Luckily I have private medical insurance through the company I work for and was referred to Spire Washington Hospital, to see a Consultant Spinal Surgeon called Mr Kalyan. From the minute I stepped into the hospital I knew I was going to be looked after, this was something different. I

went in for my first appointment with Mr Kalyan in which he explained the surgery I needed. He told me about the process and answered all of my questions - I knew I was in safe hands.

"I booked my surgery at a time that fitted around my needs and work schedule. My operation was complex but Mr Kalyan did an amazing job. I can stand up and walk around with no problems now and I have no pain what so ever, it's a surreal experience when I suffered for so long.

"The treatment and care I have received throughout my whole journey has been first class. From my first appointment and diagnosis, right through to surgery and aftercare. I felt very well looked after

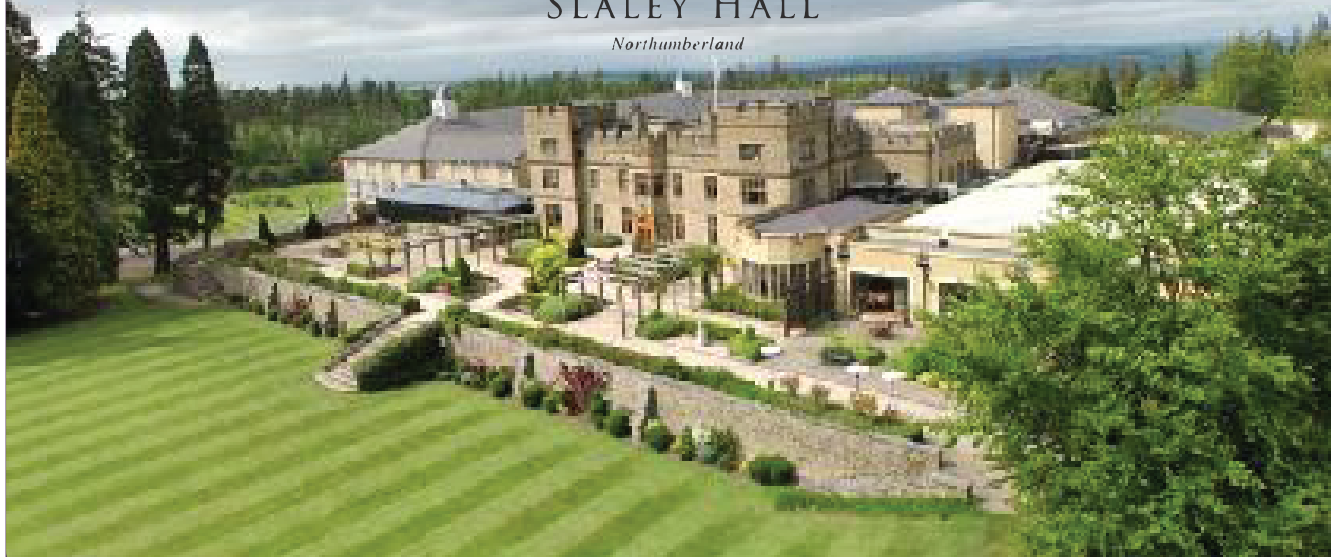
during my overnight stay - it was great to have my own private room and en-suite too. I couldn't fault any of the staff - they treat you like a person rather than a number - they were professional yet caring.

"I can't thank Mr Kalyan and the team at Spire Washington Hospital enough for what they have done for me. Since surgery, my life is getting back to normal. I'm able to enjoy long walks and have even taken up cycling, albeit slowly, but considering I couldn't walk 100 meters before I am ecstatic. I'd recommend Spire Washington Hospital to anyone - with or without private medical insurance - they are simply the best care provider that I have ever experienced."



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