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# INSIGHT

NOVEMBER 2016



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issue 17

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## foreword

## Welcome to the November edition of Northern Insight

At 148 pages this is our biggest issue yet and is one jam-packed with features and content.

Our cover stars are RSM Tenon commemorating their rebrand one year on.

In addition to this, look out for World Cup Winners Sir Geoff Hurst and Gordon Banks at a Dinner in aid of our own charity Percy Hedley, a great Autumn fashion feature from Metrocentre, a fantastic Business Lunch review and our new Property People platform.

This added to the customary potent mix of news and views makes for a terrific read.

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

**Michael Grahamslaw, Publisher**



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Editorial must be received by the 15th of the month or no responsibility is accepted for errors.

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## HEALTH SPECIALISTS TEAM UP TO SUPPORT WELLBEING AT VIRGIN MONEY

The health and wellbeing of Virgin Money colleagues is in safe hands thanks to an innovative partnership between the financial services company and two North East based health service providers.

North East physiotherapy practice Physiotherapy Matters has teamed up with Newcastle-based independent medical services provider Newcastle Premier Health to help Virgin Money offer specialist healthcare to its staff.

The multi-disciplinary initiative aims to improve the physical and mental wellbeing of staff, support people with long term problems to remain in productive employment, shorten absence times or prevent absence from work and reintegrate staff members into the workplace following periods of sick leave.

The collaborative model is also designed to improve the way that managers request occupational health support and increase the level of communication between managers, physiotherapists and occupational health professionals.

Physiotherapy Matters and Newcastle Premier Health offer regular 'drop-in' sessions for Virgin Money employees, plus a telephone triage service.

A range of online webinars videos have been created to support Virgin Money's employees to be healthier in the workplace. The online resources focus on issues such as preventing tension headaches, repetitive strain injury and back problems, and include health tips and demonstrations of desk-based exercises. This has enabled Virgin Money employees in other sites in the UK to access the



same specialist advice and wellbeing support provided to staff at the Newcastle office.

Adrienne Edwardson, Senior Health & Safety Advisor at Virgin Money, said: "The specialist service provided by Physiotherapy Matters and Newcastle Premier Health can make a huge difference to the lives of our staff members. It's fantastic to have been able to draw on their multidisciplinary expertise and vast experience of physiotherapy and occupational health to enhance the level of support we offer to our team."

## HOST OF NEW APPOINTMENTS AT SQUIRES BARNETT



Newcastle based award winning architects Squires Barnett Architects have announced a new management team with two promotions and the appointment of a new Partner.

Based in Plummer Tower in the City Centre, Squires Barnett Architects, who recently won a national design award at the Housing Design Awards, are pleased to announce that George Musson and Nathan Sanders have been promoted to Associates while Mark Squires, the former Chief Executive of Benfield Motor Group, has returned to his family duties as a new Partner.

Louise Squires, Partner and Co-Founder, said: "I'm pleased to announce our new-look management team following our recent successes and our future growth plans. George and Nathan have been working for the business for many years and have both shown they are very capable of taking on greater responsibilities. I am of course delighted to welcome my husband Mark into the family based practice, who will bring a wealth of business management experience and contacts."

Squires Barnett Architects specialises in large-scale conversions, bespoke housing and master planning, together with both commercial and civic projects.



## MBE FOR THE COASTAL ACCOUNTANT

David Hodgson of "the Coastal Accountants" Read Milburn and Co recently received the MBE from the Duke of Cambridge at an investiture ceremony at Buckingham Palace,

The honour was given for services to the Voluntary Sector and Community in North Tyneside.

During the course of the past 2 decades David has been volunteering as an officer with seventeen charitable associations aside from his role as a full time partner in his accountancy practice.

David said, "I was genuinely surprised and of course extremely pleased to receive this Honour. I have accepted it on behalf of all the very worthwhile organisations and charities that I have been working with."

**Be seen in all the right places...**





## NEWCASTLE LAW FIRM CHECKS IN WITH HOTEL PURCHASE

**A leading North East firm of solicitors is celebrating the successful purchase of a renowned hotel in the heart of Hexham.**

Newcastle-based Clarke Mairs LLP acted for clients Roger and Magda Davy in the purchase of the Best Western Beaumont Hotel, Hexham's premier hotel which overlooks Hexham Abbey and Sele Park. The late Victorian hotel has 32 double en-suite bedrooms, parking, a restaurant and bar.

The new owners live in Hexham and know the hotel well, as it is one of their favourite local venues where they have held several family gatherings.

Over the course of the purchase, Clarke Mairs' partner Tim Clarke handled business, licensing and finance matters, partner Gillian Bassett managed property matters and partner Lee Betchley was responsible for employment matters.

Roger Davy said: "Clarke Mairs provided comprehensive advice on all legal aspects of the purchase and were very approachable and helpful throughout the process. The team worked quickly and we'd be happy to recommend them. They gave us excellent support."



## ACCOUNTANTS LAY FOUNDATIONS FOR SUCCESS FOR PROPERTY BUSINESS

**A Blyth entrepreneur has taken the property market by storm with his estate agent business that has made more than 180 transactions within only 11 months of trading.**

Martin Trinder, 37 from Blyth, launched Lennon Properties in 2015 and has already sold 40 homes, let out 120 and has a fully managed strong portfolio of more than 230 residential and commercial properties throughout Northumberland.

Based in Seaforth Street in Blyth, the business is well on its way to reaching its first year turnover target of £250,000 after Jesmond-based Robson Laidler Accountants and Business Advisors have put the legal structures in place and set up accounts, tax submissions and asset protection.

Martin said: "Having purchased and sold my first property in 1997 at the young age of 18, I decided to put the skills I developed over the years to better use and set up my own unique business. Thanks to the invaluable accounting advice from Robson Laidler the business is certainly going from strength or strength."

## CASTLEGATE SUPPORT ELDERLY AT CHRISTMAS

**Stockton's award-winning shopping centre Castlegate has launched a 'Cup of Festive Kindness' community campaign which aims to benefit older people in the area.**

Organised by Castlegate Shopping Centre's 'Hampers from the Heart', the shopping centre is appealing to public and private partnerships and agencies to support the campaign by taking part in a vintage-esque tea party or by making a food donation in the centre.

The centre is appealing for goods in kind for the Christmas Afternoon Tea Dance on Tuesday 13th December. Items wanted include prizes for the raffle and Christmas bingo and party food in general. The centre is also appealing for entertainers who can help get the party in full swing. The food collection will be available every day until Saturday 17 December for shoppers to donate items. When shoppers donate a food item on Wednesdays and Saturdays (10am-3pm), the centre in return will reward them with a voucher to redeem a regular tea or coffee at Greggs, Café Express or The Stottie Company free of charge.



## NO MARCHING ORDERS FROM THIS TRADING COMPANY!

**A training company that started to offer apprenticeships just a year ago is celebrating after the first of its candidates has successfully achieved their apprenticeship. The ex-army HGV driver is now employed by the company.**

This time last year, JB Skills Training in Sunderland started to put candidates through the funded apprenticeship route, including their own employee, 28-year-old Kim Fenwick.

And Kim, who is from Easington, is now the proud holder of Business Admin NVQ, Level 2.

Having been with the company since the start, Kim worked on admin, calling candidates and doing paperwork. The company, that now employs over 30, has promoted the mum of two to the position of Trainee Compliance Officer.

Dave Macmillan, Managing Director, said: "Kim is the first of over 200 candidates we have put through apprenticeships that are due to achieve in the coming months. Kim now has the bug and will be starting her NVQ Level 3 in ITQ shortly."

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## FLEXIBILITY KEY TO ACCOMMODATING GROWTH



N-Lighten and N-Able's Amy Gray-Chilton (left) and Neil Wray (right) with Lynn Gate of The Office Co.

SMEs are a key driver of economic growth but the creative, collaborative and innovative forces propelling them forward often require the benefits of flexible managed and service office space to accommodate their requirements. Lynn Gate, Managing Director of The Office Co looks at how one of her tenants benefits from life at Metropolitan House in Gateshead.

According to the Enterprise & Social Research Council, SMEs contribute 47% of revenue to the UK economy. In the North East, start-ups and small enterprises are prevalent, playing a key role in boosting productivity – but they need specialist support to expand their businesses and increase impact.

They need to be lean, keen and agile to succeed; and the same can be said of their workspace requirements, according to The Office Co. tenant Amy Gray-Chilton, who along with Co-Director Neil Wray, runs training provider N-Lighten and N-Able North East Ltd from 1,200 sq. m of commercial accommodation at Metropolitan House.

Amy and Neil are seeing their business flourish since relocating to six offices at The Office Co.'s site earlier in 2016. It's a move that's provided the capacity to expand the scope of adult health and safety, leadership and management, NCFE accredited qualifications and Nuco accredited First Aid, manual handling, and health and safety training courses provided to North East-based customers who include New Beginnings North East Ltd, which has a work force of over 300 employees.

A key requirement for Amy as she looks

to sustain momentum is a supple, quality workspace environment that can be expanded to accommodate the needs of training teams and assessors when onsite delivering learning sessions.

In relocating to Metropolitan House, she said: "We needed somewhere that would provide high quality workspace but without all the usual associated costs, hassles and long term commitments that's involved in renting our own dedicated offices.

"Coming to Metropolitan House has avoided all this in one simple, straightforward and financially advantageous move."

Work space at Metropolitan House combines the flexibility required for a start-up with a practical and cost effective lease in a comprehensive package that allows the training provider to take advantage of hired facilities such as a reception, and tailored services which include inbound call handling and deliveries.

Amy also benefits from what she describes as the 'great atmosphere' at Metropolitan House, adding: "It's a very friendly and happy environment, making it a fantastic place to work and run a business.

"The facility is extremely well run, welcoming and

in a great location with easy access to main roads and ample onsite parking for customers. There's an inclusive superfast broadband service that's quick and reliable, while the service from Lynn and her team is never short of first-class."

The Office Co. recognises that one size does not fit all and that the way to prosperity for tenants are all-inclusive packages centred around the values of a community driven business environment. This homespun approach works, providing an inspiring and creative hub in the heart of Gateshead where the ambition, drive and hard work of N-Lighten and N-Able's directors pays dividends.

The month-to-month rolling contract arrangements on offer are aligned with Amy and Neil's future plans, in particular the expansion of the workforce as training provision gears-up its activity over the next 12 months.

"We see 2017 as being an extremely busy year as we look to grow and expand our training provision. The need for flexible, cost effective office capacity will be central to achieving this; and I can think of no better place than Metropolitan House to provide this."

The Office Co. offers a range of serviced and managed offices, virtual offices and meeting rooms for a wide range of businesses.

More at [www.theofficeco.co.uk](http://www.theofficeco.co.uk)





## REMOTE CONTROL FOR SCHOOL NETWORKS

Schools are increasingly switching onto the benefits of remote network monitoring, says Graeme Walker, senior IT technician at Newcastle-based Calibre Secured Networks Ltd. But what's the advantage and how do schools protect their investment?

Simply put, remote monitoring is a standard specification that enables a school's network to be accessed and managed off-site from a central location using devices such as monitors or probes. The technology assists network administrators and those with responsibility for system security and control with the tools for efficient network infrastructure control and management.

Remote monitoring capabilities are especially helpful for small teams stationed in one spot but with responsibility for IT provision across wide sites. With remote network access, if a device goes down, you don't have to travel to that location to identify and fix any problems. This saves time, increases productivity, and enables a school to rest easy knowing that the whole network is monitored 24/7.

However, understanding how to protect a network is as equally important as the initial investment, so schools need to consider a number of steps to identify where responsibility lies and processes reside. Here are some initial tips to get IT right:

- Ensure school managers and governors acknowledge the importance of and responsibilities for maintaining e-Learning security.
- If possible, work with an external technology partner, who offers objectivity, to ensure technical measures are in place to protect your school's network. These include firewalls,

filtering for malicious and inappropriate content etc.

- Ensure and maintain user privileges for teaching staff, administrators and pupils to ensure they can access the required facilities while minimising the potential for deliberate or accidental misuse of the network.
- Develop an e-security protocol to ensure everyone understands their obligations and responsibilities through easy-to-understand and intuitive education and training.
- Establish and maintain proper processes to log, report on and monitor any e-security incidents
- Make sure that you have the necessary technical protections in place to detect and prevent any malicious code or content damaging network confidentiality, integrity and availability.
- Establish and maintain effective network monitoring to ensure attacks and other e-security breaches are detected quickly - enabling a rapid and proactive response.
- Consider placing controls on the use of removable devices such as USBs, which can introduce malware inadvertently or accidentally to your network.
- Also, ensure there are effective mechanisms in place to support remote use of school network facilities by staff and pupils, particularly for devices that are used onsite and beyond.

Adopting this kind of no-nonsense approach helps schools protect their network investments and reflects how expertise provided by Calibre, which combines technology and experience, can make an impact at, for instance, Sunderland's Castle View Enterprise Academy among other sites.

There, the provision of technical expertise and remote networking support is delivering improved monitoring and identification of system performance, security and reliability issues, ensuring hundreds of 11-16 year old students are benefiting from access to state-of-the-art learning technologies and resources integrated into a school-wide system, that's delivered across a network.

Lee Anderson, leadership and business support manager at Castle View Enterprise Academy, said: "Calibre impressed with a solution that will not only improve the quality of the network support we receive but also ensure our students continue to benefit from e-Learning in a safe and secure environment."

The message is clear, get the protection right from the very start, and schools will enjoy the long-term benefits their network investment deserves. Take a short cut, or get it wrong, and you could be looking at years of heartache and headache. Can you afford the risk? Calibre solutions enable schools to maximise their return on investment through the deployment of technology to meet their business challenges.

More at [www.calibre-secured.net](http://www.calibre-secured.net)





## 66 DINNER MARKS ANOTHER HISTORIC WIN

A charity dinner to celebrate the 50th anniversary of England's historic World Cup win raised £75,000 for The Percy Hedley Foundation's Building Brighter Futures Appeal.

Held at The Baltic Centre for Contemporary Arts, the event saw guests of honour Sir Geoff Hurst MBE and Gordon Banks OBE recall tales from '66 to the audience.

The Percy Hedley Foundation would like to thank Sir Geoff Hurst MBE, Gordon Banks OBE, Graeme Danby and Pete Graves for making it such a wonderful night. The charity would also like to thank St. James's Place Wealth Management, Mark Beverley, Phil Pringle, Dan Aziz Photography, Shiremoor Press, Climb Creative, Blue Kangaroo Design, Big Purple Productions, The Baltic, Victory Signs and the National Football Museum.







Photos credit: Dan Aziz Photography



## THE RSM BRAND – A YEAR ON

In October 2015, the largest mid-tier national accountancy firm in the North East rebranded its business, uniting 760 offices in 120 countries under one global name, RSM.

Now the sixth largest audit, tax and consulting network, globally, RSM has continued to push forward with its ambition to become the first-choice adviser to middle market leaders in the North East, the UK and across the world.

### **Twelve months on since the global rebrand, what has this meant for the North East team at RSM?**

'Since rebranding, RSM has continued to evolve and develop to respond to the changing needs of our clients, with quality client service remaining the focus of our approach' says Steve Raitlon, North East managing partner at RSM.

'Our brand positioning – the power of being understood – has continued to reinforce our belief in building strong collaborative relationships with clients based on an understanding of their strategies and aspirations. In turn, the single, consistent and identifiable global brand has provided our clients and our people with a greater confidence that they are making the right choice in working with RSM.'

"To provide a great client service, we need to continually adapt to market needs" Steve continues. "Clients appreciate proactive advisory services such as our tax and consultancy capabilities as

added value to our compliance service. In addition to consolidating our brand positioning through the rebrand, this year has seen RSM broaden its service offering, through the acquisition of an HR consulting business and the launch of RSM Legal enabling the firm to provide regulated legal services to its existing clients.

'Our unified global offering has strengthened our capability to provide international advice to our North East clients, helping us unlock new business opportunities for both the firm and our clients. Only recently a long-standing client saw the benefit of our closer connections with international colleagues, working with us to identify growth options and resulting in an eventual sale to a European company. This is a perfect example of how we are able to combine global expertise with local knowledge to support ambitious, entrepreneurial businesses to achieve their strategic goals.'

The developments since October 2015 haven't solely been client focused. This year, RSM welcomed its largest trainee intake in the UK, expanding the headcount across the UK by 10 per cent.

'Following the rebrand, the firm has continued to invest in key service areas of audit, tax and consulting through attracting and retaining the best talent,"

continues Steve. 'Our people are crucial to the success of our business. We continue to take our responsibility to attract and retain talent in the North East seriously. We recently welcomed eight trainees to strengthen our audit, tax and financial reporting team in the North East region alone, bringing our North East office headcount to over 130 people.'

'All of these developments have further strengthened the offering we can provide to the local, national and international market.'

### **And RSM's focus for the next twelve months?**

'The coming year will see us continue to build on the momentum of the rebrand and push ahead to deliver more growth, increasing the breadth and depth of our expertise and investing in key North East talent', says Steve.

'Each development highlights the evolution and progression of the firm as we continue to stay ahead of market changes and adapt to an ever-changing business landscape. That said, understanding our clients remains at the heart of what we do. The core essence of our approach is, and will continue to be, building strong, collaborative relationships with the great businesses we have here in the North East.'









L - R: Ashleigh Petre, Iain Dorkin, Samantha Ho, Mike Pott, Liane Granger and Sarah Conner

## NEXT GENERATION STEPPING UP AT RMT ACCOUNTANTS

Five members of the next generation of finance professionals at RMT Accountants & Business Advisors have taken their next step up the career ladder.

The Gosforth-based firm has recognised the progress and potential of the young team members by promoting each of them to new positions and broadening the range of responsibilities that they have within the practice.

In the firm's specialist division, RMT Healthcare, Iain Dorkin has moved into a Tax Supervisor role, while Samantha Ho has become an Accounts Supervisor and Sarah Conner is now an Accounts Manager.

Liane Granger has been appointed to an Audit Manager role in RMT's client services team, while colleague Ashleigh Petre has been promoted to an equivalent position in its commercial services division.

RMT provides the full range of financial and business advisory services through its accountancy, specialist tax, medical and healthcare, corporate

finance and recovery & insolvency teams, and works with firms of all sizes both within and outside the North East.

The 62 year-old firm is one of the largest independent practices in the North East and employs more than 75 people, and recently made three new internal appointments to a now eight-strong management board.

Liane Granger, who works predominantly with medium-sized and large limited companies, says: "In my new role, I will be managing our audit teams, reviewing audit and accounts files and looking after a mixed client portfolio, and hope to use my skills to further strengthen and develop the relationships we have with our clients.

"RMT is a great place to work because of the people and the overall team mentality. Whether you have a technical query, a software problem, or a necessity to discuss the results of the Bake Off,

there's always someone to help!"

Sarah Conner adds: "Our Healthcare division has been going through a period of very strong growth, acquiring new clients both within and outside the North East.

"In my new role, I'll be continuing to broaden and apply my knowledge of the issues that impact on clients clinical and financial operations in this specialist sector, as well as supporting other members of the team as they look to also progress their careers."

Mike Pott, Managing Director at RMT Accountants & Business Advisors says: "RMT has a strong team at every level of the firm that contributes directly to our success, and these latest promotions are due reward for my colleagues' dedication, hard work and commercial expertise."

For further information on RMT Accountants & Business Advisors, please visit [www.r-m-t.co.uk](http://www.r-m-t.co.uk)



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IN CONVERSATION WITH

## Caroline Laffey

Director, Tax &amp; People Services, KPMG

### What were your career ambitions growing up?

After growing out of the hairdresser or shop assistant phase, I decided I wanted to be an accountant. My dad says it was inevitable as I always used to save my pocket money; we all know accountancy is so much more than that.

### Can you briefly outline your career path for the readers?

When I started training the routes into the profession were very traditional. I did A levels in Accountancy, Economics and Maths and studied Accountancy and Economics at the University of Glasgow. After graduating, I joined the corporate tax department at Ernst & Young and qualified as a Chartered Tax Adviser. I then joined the tax department at Tait Walker to gain broader experience across all taxes before developing an interest in employee issues. I moved to the employment tax department at KPMG 12 years ago and am now a Director in the Employer Reward Services Team advising companies on PAYE and National Insurance compliance and all aspects of employee reward. The routes into the profession are now far more varied and interesting and our graduates and school leavers are able to work across a range of functions and are encouraged to work overseas before committing to a specialism.

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

Tax legislation changes constantly but the potential changes in the Autumn statements are

unprecedented and are keeping us really busy. I lead the national Public Sector Employer Reward Services team and we are supporting the sector in preparing for the new off payroll worker rules and working with reward teams to review their reward strategy to accommodate the potential changes to salary sacrifice. Our work is varied and we continue to support clients in traditional areas e.g. supporting and preparing for HMRC compliance reviews on PAYE and National Minimum Wage but we are also working with our legal services team to support on gender pay gap reporting and our data analytics teams as clients model the impact of changes to e.g. National Living Wage rates and increased pension auto-enrolment contributions. The range of issues we advise on means that it is more important than ever to work more closely with our data analytics, pensions, legal services and indirect tax teams when advising clients.

### Summarise your greatest business achievements to date?

It has to be when I was named Tax Adviser of the Year at the North East Accountancy Awards which was also the year I made Director at KPMG.

### What's the best piece of business advice you've been given?

Identify a range of role models who will challenge you to leave your comfort zone.

### Who are your heroes both in and out of business?

I love that women are now so powerful in the

world of politics but I don't really have heroes as such. I suppose my first hero was Heather Haversham; she was a young accountant in the soap opera Brookside who epitomised the successful career woman for me and it was her fictitious character that made me to decide I wanted to be an accountant.

### What motivates you?

My family especially my 2 daughters who are 12 and 14. It is really important to me that they see that work can be both challenging and enjoyable and that it is possible to achieve a good work life balance.

### When not in the swivel chair, how do you like to relax?

Our kids really push themselves so I feel the need to be braver and have taken up horse riding again which I love. I also go "running" with my sister and when I say run, I really mean jogging as we can spend the whole time talking.

### What's your favourite book and why?

I enjoyed Girl on the Train recently - I don't think it translated very well into film but the book was gripping.

### How would you like to be remembered?

As somebody who never took anything or anybody for granted. I have no sense of entitlement and regard myself as very lucky to live the life that I have.





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## NORTH EAST IT SOLUTIONS PROVIDER STRENGTHENS ITS OFFERING WITH NEW APPOINTMENT

**Perfect Image, a North East-based technology solutions provider, has strengthened its approach to customer service with a new appointment.**

Glyn Elrington joins Perfect Image as the Head of Account Management, a newly developed role which will see the company take a unique and strengthened approach to customer service. Working from Perfect Image's offices on the Cobalt Business Park in North Tyneside, Glyn will be responsible for looking after the business' growing portfolio of clients, building relationships and ensuring customers fully understand all that Perfect Image can offer.

Commenting on her appointment, Glyn said: "Joining Perfect Image has been very exciting and I am thoroughly enjoying getting to know the clients and building relationships with them."

Glyn was recommended for the role by Sarah Harper, a Business Development Manager at Perfect Image, due to her successful development of client relationships through customer service programmes within international companies including Sage, Vision and Inspired.



## CHARITY SPECIALIST TAKES SENIOR ROLE AT CHUF

**A North East charity has strengthened its team further with the addition of a Senior Fundraising Manager. The Children's Heart Unit Fund (CHUF) has added Charlotte Campbell to its growing team.**

Charlotte, aged 29, explained: "Having been involved in the charity sector in the North East for a number of years, I knew of the incredible growth curve CHUF has been on. To be a part of that now is an incredibly exciting feeling."

Charlotte, who lives in Roker in Sunderland, brings with her a wealth of charity-related experience, having arrived from the Marie Curie Hospice in Elswick, Newcastle, and having spent time with Team Valley-based ethical traders, Traidcraft, where she worked on the Traidcraft Exchange charity programme.

CHUF offers support to children and their families who have undergone treatment at the Children's Heart Unit of the Freeman Hospital in Newcastle.



## EMMA JOINS WALTONS CLARK WHITEHILL'S GROWING TEAM

**Tees Valley Chartered Accountants and Business Advisers Waltons Clark Whitehill has appointed Emma Harrington as a lead Auditor in its Business Services Team.**

Emma Harrington, 26, has 5 years' experience and recently became ACA qualified with the Institute of Chartered Accountants of England and Wales. She graduated with a history degree in 2011 from Northumbria University.

Waltons Clark Whitehill's team provides a range of support services for clients, including annual accounts, bookkeeping, VAT and tax services.

Heather O'Driscoll, Managing Director of Waltons Clark Whitehill, said: "We're delighted to welcome Emma to the team, her skills and experience within the industry will allow us to provide an outstanding service to our growing client base."

Emma said: "I'm excited to take the next step in my career by joining Waltons Clark Whitehill. It is a great company that is very active in the North East business sector."

## NEW CEO APPOINTED AT RTC NORTH

**Former Membership Director at EEF, the manufacturers' organisation, Andrew Buckley has been appointed as Chief Executive of the innovation and technology transfer company, RTC North.**

With a 30-year track record in marketing, sales, business development and general management, Andrew has been appointed to oversee the growth of the firm and develop services to companies across the Northern Powerhouse.

Set up in 1989 in Sunderland, RTC was one of 12 Regional Technology Centres established around the country to help businesses develop new products and services by accessing expertise within regional universities. Today, the company employs 65 people at offices in Sunderland, Leeds and Daresbury and delivers a mix of technology transfer, innovation and growth programmes.

Andrew said: "I'm delighted to be joining RTC at an exciting time in the organisation's development. RTC is well placed to help businesses to innovate, improve their competitiveness and access new markets".





# BREXIT, WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR THE CHARITY SECTOR?



When the United Kingdom voted to leave the European Union on the 23rd of June 2016, one main issue became increasingly apparent; nobody really knew what was going to happen.

Ironically, many politicians who had campaigned for a leave vote seemed very keen to leave their positions in the days that followed, David Cameron tendered his resignation as Prime Minister, and the value of the pound plummeted. It was all a bit of a mess.

It would have taken a gargantuan effort to avoid the topic of Brexit, with the mass media coverage predicting impending doom if the vote to remain did not materialise. Now, almost three months later, what can we predict about the impact of Brexit on the charity sector?

Over 40 representatives from charities and not for profit organisations attended UNW's recent charity briefing – where James Garbutt, Investment Director at Rathbones, was joined by UNW's VAT Partner Mark Hetherington in delivering an expert guide into what could happen when the government finally triggers Article 50, and what this may mean for charities here in the North East.

Charity representatives from across the region listened attentively as Mark and James outlined the consequences of the Brexit vote, and shared their expertise on what action to take from a non-profit perspective. It was evident from those in attendance that clarification regarding funds already resting in accounts was of paramount importance; discipline

and realism seemed to be two key words to take from the briefing.

## EU Funding

In 2014, 250 UK charities received approximately £220 million in funding from the EU. Despite still officially being a member, it is entirely plausible that this funding will soon disappear. The main focus James highlighted was, however, that it is simply uncertain rather than set in stone. Focussing on one example of a charity within the education sector, James pointed out that they have had to delay plans, due to uncertainty surrounding their EU funding. The EU makes up a relatively small (0.5%) proportion of the charity sector's overall funding, but other organisations providing grants to charity organisations are also likely to be affected by Brexit in some form; regular communication with the appropriate bodies is vital until there is some real clarity on the situation.

## Interest Rates

The recession of 2009 saw the Bank of England cut interest rates to 0.5%, and the Brexit vote has led to that being halved again last month. Rates are unlikely to rise in the near future, meaning returns on cash will remain at rock bottom. Companies will

therefore have to apply real risk in the hunt for yield, but this is not a realistic proposition for those in the charity sector. James advised audience members not to make any rash decisions with funds.

## VAT

With around £115 billion provided to the government through VAT each year, there is no chance they will abolish the revenue anytime in the foreseeable future. In the wake of Brexit, without hands tied due to EU law, tinkering with the VAT system is a possibility. Changes would most likely be minor, however, but there may be better prospect of charities being able to lobby for additional zero-related VAT reliefs.

Citing Longridge on the Thames as an example, Mark warned the audience about setting the bar higher when approaching councils for grant funding. Longridge on the Thames was a case that raised fears that VAT exemptions for charities could be lost. Negotiating for the potential VAT charge to be supplied in addition to the requested grant would be most advisable.

When an audience member asked about the possibility of VAT charges being introduced on charitable donations, Mark reiterated his belief that it would never become a realistic prospect in the UK.

## MAKE YOUR TEETH FIT FOR BUSINESS

Having the perfect set of teeth is not about vanity, it's about an essential tool for business success, as multi-award winning cosmetic dentist, Dr Ken Harris, explains.

You wear designer clothes, you've got the latest devices, a leather briefcase and the expensive watch – so you should be all set to show your business skill.

But, as we are subconsciously being judged from the minute we meet someone, if our teeth don't measure up, it could seriously affect a professional relationship.

What seem like really superficial factors actually impact on what people think of us, which can also influence whether they like someone enough to do a job.

It may seem an unfair way to judge someone's ability but the truth of that matter is your teeth CAN affect your business success.

A study showed 528 subjects before and after pictures of people who had cosmetic dental work and asked them to evaluate them on traits such as intelligence, success and friendliness.

Those rating the pictures overwhelmingly assigned more positive qualities to the post treatment images, confirming how we react to people with teeth that aren't stained, missing or crooked.

When we met someone one of the first things we look at are their mouths and we perceive people



with crooked teeth negatively.

Busy business people often put off looking after the basics because they feel they don't have the time, but neglecting your teeth can have far reaching consequences.

At Riveredge we have made provisions to accommodate the needs of busy businessmen and women. NHS dentist's usually only give a 30 minute maximum appointment, which can mean a number of repeat visits.

A private practice like ours can book a whole morning or afternoon to deal with everything in one appointment, so the patient doesn't need to block out a number of times in their hectic schedule.

Make time to look after your teeth – it may be just what your business needs.

Headed by up Dr Ken Harris, Riveredge Cosmetic Dentistry has surgeries in both Sunderland and Newcastle.

For further information visit [www.riveredge.co.uk](http://www.riveredge.co.uk)

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*“The most important thing is to understand what the client wants to achieve going forward. Often clients are unsure and we discuss the art of the possible.”*



IN CONVERSATION WITH...

**STEPHEN HALL**

SENIOR PARTNER FOR DELOITTE

We have been speaking to Stephen Hall, Newcastle Office, Senior Partner for Deloitte, about the challenges individuals face when they find themselves with cash proceeds from a company sale. Stephen has been a tax adviser for over twenty years and has much experience in helping individuals prepare their businesses for sale, guiding them through the process and then helping them structure their wealth afterwards.

**Stephen, what do you see as the predominant reason for clients coming to speak to you when their circumstances change?**

Usually the client wants peace of mind. The sale of a business is often an emotional experience for the shareholders. The decision to sell was often a difficult one in the first place – is it right for the family to sell the source of its wealth and status? Then the sale process that follows may be protracted, time consuming and intense – perhaps with ups and downs as obstacles to the sale appear and are then overcome – whilst always there is still a business to be run! The day job doesn't go away.

After the initial euphoria of a successful sale, reality sets in and the realisation that everything has changed. This can be quite a wrench. Often the business has taken all of the owner's energy for years if not decades and there is a sense of loss. The shareholders had previously felt in control of their destiny in owning their own trading business whereas holding large amounts of cash is alien to them and they don't know what to do. They were happy creating the wealth but feel intimidated by the pressure to preserve it. They want to make informed choices and my role is to help them understand what is possible and help them form a strategy.

Sometimes they just want a chat too, about all kinds of things. I find that sometimes clients who have sold their businesses can feel quite isolated, not quite knowing who to trust and finding that some people treat them differently now they have lots of cash.

**What areas need to be covered?**

The most important thing is to understand what the client wants to achieve going forward. Often clients are unsure and we discuss the art of the possible.

Our first priority after that has to be to help the client to evaluate their tax profile and the best way for them to structure their future investments given their ambitions. We work closely with the client's financial planner or wealth manager to deliver what the client requires. I think that it is always better if planning for the new found wealth started prior to the business sale and that clients have already found advisers they are comfortable with. For example, the best prepared clients have

already modeled how much income they will need once the business is sold and therefore at what price a sale becomes viable! People need to have understood their tax position as there will undoubtedly be tax to pay on the business sale and this has to be factored in to the equation. They then need to have thought about how much money they need to see them through retirement so they know how much of the capital they can spend on treats, gifts or indeed speculative new business ventures.

It is natural for people to think about succession planning at this time. After all, it is an end of an era. We therefore often spend time discussing who they want to provide for and also who they want to leave money to in their Will. Often we introduce the client to a Private Client lawyer and Wills are drafted as for the first time the individual feels like a wealthy person. Inheritance tax planning becomes an area of interest given the business reliefs available where trading businesses are passed on are no longer available.

Gifts are a top priority for many. Whilst there is much that can be done after the event, again I would say that decisions around gifts to family members should ideally be made prior to the company sale as often this is when the gifts are most easily made in a tax efficient manner.

**What is your main role as tax adviser?**

I work with the client and their other advisers to define personal objectives and then to ensure that the investments are held in the most appropriate structure. This may often be a company or trust.

Once the client has determined their investment, succession and tax strategies, I ensure that everything is set up and reported appropriately to HM Revenue and Customs. With wealth comes complexity and it is important that everything is entered properly on the relevant tax returns and explained fully – this avoids misunderstandings arising and therefore gives peace of mind as well as ensuring the right result.

**What types of structure are currently used?**

Where people are intending to spend cash in the short term, the underlying investments should be held personally. Often though cash is being set aside for the long term. There are good reasons for putting assets into other structures. Trusts can be a useful way of ring fencing wealth for future generations but there again they are something most people are not familiar with and can seem complex.

People prefer things they can understand which feel simple and straight forward, and given all the press people are wary of "tax planning". Therefore companies are becoming increasingly popular.

Former business owners are familiar with them as a structure and they are commonly used because they offer flexibility and opportunities for succession planning as well as tax efficiency.

**What do you see as your clients' biggest obstacles?**

Often people are fearful of the situation they find themselves in – there is a fear of the unknown. They feel a responsibility to preserve the family's wealth and that can weigh heavily. They feel a loss of control. It's therefore important to gain the client's confidence and trust, share your experiences and explain your thinking fully.

There are also many difficult decisions to be made and some uncomfortable truths to face. How much to spend and how much to save? Should wealth be passed to the children? And if so, at what age? Will it be safe with them or will it be a burden? How much will they need to preserve their lifestyle? People have to think hard about their own and their family's future. They have to confront their own mortality. Sometimes people feel it easier to put things off.

Whilst not necessarily tax related, I also think it's my job to sometimes have difficult conversations about things like pre-nuptial agreements and divorce. Not easy conversations to have, but I generally find that wealthy clients are grateful for the candour.

**What would your tip be to someone looking to sell their business?**

The earlier you fully understand your financial position the better.

Don't just think about how much your business is worth. Think also about how much money you need going forward to maintain your lifestyle through your retirement. Understand your tax position.

Think about your objectives – it can often be easier and more tax efficient to make gifts before the business is sold rather than afterwards. Whilst it may seem like an obvious thing, it's important to think about why the business is being sold, and actually whether keeping it (either medium or long-term) is the better answer. All too often building to an "exit" is seen as how things are done, but that's not the right thing for everybody.

Most importantly, select advisers you can work with and that can work together.

# ARE YOU LOOKING CLOSELY ENOUGH?



*Since the financial crash of 2008, it has become increasingly important for taxpayers and companies to minimise costs and reduce tax liabilities. Whilst cuts in the main rate of corporation tax have gone some way to alleviating the negative impact the current economic climate has had on business, some say it hasn't gone far enough. But are companies doing all they can to lift the gloom? Here, Barry James of Leathers LLP discusses potential missed opportunities in relation to Research and Development Tax Relief and claims where you least expect it...*

We all like something for free. And I'm sure we've all experienced the joy of a tax rebate from HMRC! Sometimes, we'll sit down to watch the Budget (well, some of us do), and we'll get good news in relation additional tax reliefs. But, in recent times, any good news is usually offset by a tax hike, or withdrawal of relief elsewhere in the Budget announcements; the books need to be balanced.

It hasn't always been this way. In the early 2000's, riding the crest of an economic boom, Gordon Brown gave us R&D tax relief. And incredibly, not only is R&D tax relief still going strong after 15 long years, it has evolved to such an extent that it is actually more beneficial to companies than ever before.

Whilst HMRC do an excellent job of explaining R&D tax relief on their website and the assistance provided by HMRC's dedicated R&D offices is extremely useful, I'm sure we can all understand that HMRC are not going to run a nationwide advertising campaign telling millions of UK taxpayers how to reduce their company tax bills. After all, we're in the era of self-assessment and the onus is on the companies to obtain as much relief as possible.

As a consequence, and because R&D relief still has

some way to go to shift the "men in white coats" stereotype, there are thousands of companies missing out on R&D tax relief. Depending on the size of the company, unclaimed relief could be in the millions; companies simply do not realise that they will have qualifying R&D expenditure.

This point is perhaps best illustrated with a real life example.

We act for Alexanders Prestige Limited and Alexanders Horseboxes Limited, who trade in prestigious cars and horseboxes respectively. The companies are successful, profitable, and have earned themselves a reputation as market leaders. But they're in the motor trade, surely there's no R&D? The companies have been trading for years, they've never claimed anything before, surely there's no R&D?

Using our technical tax expertise, by getting to know the client, their products, their processes and by asking a few simple questions, it quickly became apparent the company had been undertaking some form of R&D for years.

- Have you sought a scientific or technological advance?
- Did you try to solve scientific or technological uncertainties?

- Did you adopt a systematic approach to overcome such uncertainties?
- Have you developed patented components or processes?

The answer to all of the questions was "yes".

The bespoke nature of the development of the company's horseboxes required innovative thought and technological solutions, particularly in relation to health and safety aspects.

Therefore through thorough investigation and collaboration with the directors, technical staff and support staff, we were able to make a valuable R&D claim on behalf of the company. In addition, we were also able to review the company's eligibility for the Patent Box Regime, and make an election for future profits to be taxed at a lower rate.

The message to companies is simple - check whether you qualify for R&D tax relief, ask yourself the question (or better still, ask an expert!), you might be surprised at the outcome...

**leathers** LLP

For advice and assistance with Research and Development Tax Relief or the Patent Box Regime, contact Barry James at Leathers LLP (b.james@leathersllp.co.uk) or call 0191 224 6760





(L to R) James Bryce, Square One Law, Doug Gray, GrainCo, Sally Hyslop, Square One Law

## GRAINCO LTD EXPANDS WITH AQUISITION OF COUNTY DURHAM GRAIN STORAGE AND SEED PROCESSING FACILITY

GrainCo Ltd, the South Shields-based agricultural marketing, trading and processing business, has expanded its operations with the acquisition of new facilities in County Durham with the support of Square One Law.

The company, which delivers grain marketing and trading services along with operating grain drying, storage and export facilities, has purchased business assets, premises and equipment on the 15-acre site in Piercebridge near Darlington. The acquisition expands its capabilities into the processing of cereal seed.

Featuring storage for 40,000 tonnes of grain, the Piercebridge facilities, which have been acquired from Mole Valley Farmers and also contains a seed plant that can process and treat in excess of 4,000 tonnes of seed which is sold to farmers.

This new operation expands GrainCo's presence in the seed market, where it already markets product as an agent, or directly for other seed houses.

Doug Gray, Business Development Director, from GrainCo Ltd, said: "Given GrainCo's history with the Piercebridge site we are delighted to bring it in to our estate. The acquisition is an important part of the continued strategic development of the business. Given our existing expertise in grain storage, marketing and seed supply the purchase of the site provides clear synergies. The seed plant enables GrainCo to improve its service in this part of the sector and we are very grateful for the continued support given by our farmer customers over the autumn campaign.

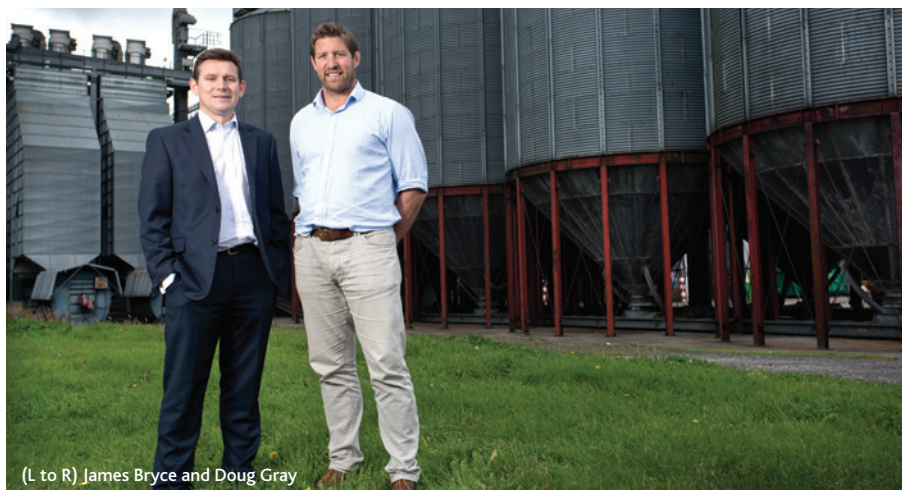
"It was imperative to complete the transaction to a strict timetable to ensure we could utilise the resources the site offers before the current harvest. The diligence and tenacity shown by our advisers at Square One Law was second to none and ensured we could get this deal across the line in time for the harvest."

Square One Law's Head of Corporate and Commercial, James Bryce, negotiated the sale, with support given from its property team to undertake full due diligence on the site's property assets.

James Bryce, said: "This acquisition is a very good fit with GrainCo's existing operations, enabling it to increase its capabilities and presence in the

market. The success of GrainCo's business model further emphasises the strength of the North East agricultural sector and its importance to the region's economy."

With six facilities across the North East and Scotland including dockside operations in Blyth and Teesside, GrainCo has the capability to store more than 200,000 tonnes of grain. Each year it trades in excess of one million tonnes of grain including wheat, feed barley, malting barley, oats and oil seed rape. GrainCo was formed in 1996 and is a subsidiary of the TyneGrain Ltd group of companies. It employs around 50 people and has a turnover of in excess of £170m.



(L to R) James Bryce and Doug Gray



## WHY DO YOU NEED US?

We are often asked why do I need a mortgage broker?  
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A recent survey about the home buying process discovered that on the whole the experience is positive and exciting, but the mortgage element was a huge negative. Whilst we can't promise to make the mortgage process exciting (we're not magicians!), we will work on your behalf to effectively manage your mortgage application, including:-

- working with you to establish a budget for your purchase at an early stage.
- carry out comprehensive research using our expert knowledge of lenders requirements to match you with the most effective mortgage option.
- work across the whole market to give you independent advice – we are not tied to any individual lender.
- deal with as much of the paperwork as possible and submit the application on your behalf.

- chase up the lender and keep you advised of progress throughout.

- with your permission liaise with third parties such as estate agents, surveyors, accountants and solicitors to save you time and hassle.

On average a straight forward application (yes they do exist apparently) requires at least 10 hours of work, and often more. We would estimate that the layman could take double this time even if nothing goes wrong - does our service now sound like a useful addition?

In the past month alone three new clients have used our services having initially decided that they did not understand the value we add. In each case, after days of hassle and stress in trying to obtain a mortgage directly, they decided enough was enough and came to us to deliver the mortgage that they needed.

Local, face-to-face, independent mortgage advice can smooth the process - we are ready to take your call and offer assistance!

Paul Hardingham is Director of Innovate Mortgages and Loans  
paul@innovateml.co.uk www.innovateml.co.uk 0191 2233514

Your home is at risk if you do not keep up repayments on a mortgage or other loan secured on it. Think carefully before securing other debts against your home. Innovate Mortgages and Loans is a trading style of Innovation Financial Management Ltd.

## TAXING MATTERS – LOOK TO THE FUTURE NOW...

Christmas is around the corner. And beyond those jolly jingle bells and ho-hoing from St Nick, another noise can be heard - deep sighs and groans from parents and non-parents alike as they weigh up the cost of the festivities.

But between this and the hectic nature of Christmas, you could be easily forgiven for having pushed tax and money matters to the back of your mind. But once 2016 rolls over and 2017 presents itself, there are major changes coming to benefits and taxes when the April tax year comes around. So let us explain – before life becomes a chaotic mix of wrapping paper and tinsel.

April 2017 will see more than a few switches to bereavement support, employment support and even the TV license. Here we discuss some of the biggest talking points.

First, Child Tax Credit, in his summer budget, the Chancellor announced the implementation of a 'two child rule' for families from April. It means that support from Child Tax Credit will be limited to two children – hence the name – with any children born after April 2017, after the first two, not eligible for further support.

The £545 a year family element will also cease after 2017, although families with children born before April 2017 will continue to get it but families with those born after, will not. On the flip side of the coin for families with children, the current 15 hours of free childcare for working parents is set to double to 30 hours per week.

Universal Credit will see similar changes to Child Tax Credit come April, in that it will be limited to two children per family. Parents will also be encouraged back into work with a three year, three step plan involving interviews, preparation and job-seeking to get them into employment by the time their youngest turns three.

We mentioned the TV licence is also set to change; all over 75s will be given it for free with the funding for this being passed from Government to the BBC.



This was just a brief overview, and in the coming months we will cover some more changes in more depth, but as always if you need any advice or information on any aspect of money or tax, call me at KP Simpson Certified Public Accountants on 0191 420 0550 or email us at [info@kpsimpson.co.uk](mailto:info@kpsimpson.co.uk)



## CASHFLOW PLANNING – A MUCH BETTER WAY OF ADVISING



Stephen Sumner

Over the years, a lot of clients have come to me looking for advice about retirement. For some clients, retirement means selling-up their own businesses in search of a quieter life, whereas others may just be retiring because they want to, or because early retirement has been offered to them by their employer. No matter the circumstances however, for many people, the prospect of retirement can be daunting and can raise a lot of concerns about future financial security.

For the majority of my clients, the first question they ask when considering retirement is: 'Will I have enough money to live on?' Other commonly asked questions include: 'Can I still afford to go on holiday?', 'Can I still afford to replace my car?' or, 'If I were to die, would my partner be financially secure?' For many years, Explore Wealth Management has been operating a cashflow planning system that can provide the answers to all of these questions and more, to help provide peace of mind to potential retirees.

So, how does it work? Basically, our clients supply us with a breakdown of their first years' likely expenditure upon retirement, and from this, we can establish through the cashflow planning system whether their existing pensions and savings will be enough to cover their needs for the rest of their lives.

I recently met with a lady who had just become a grandparent for the first time. Her daughter was planning to return to work, so through our cashflow planning system, we were able to demonstrate to the lady that she could afford to give up her job to become a full time grandmother.

On another occasion, I met a company rep who was tired of travelling and constantly being away from home. We talked about his expenditure needs in retirement and we were able to demonstrate to him that not only could he afford to retire early; he could also afford to buy a holiday home in Spain.

So with cashflow planning, the prospect of retirement need not be so daunting.

To find out how Explore Wealth Management can help you, contact Stephen and his team on 0191 285 1555 or visit: [www.explorewealth.co.uk](http://www.explorewealth.co.uk)



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# Shawn Bone

Director at Cavu Corporate Finance

## What were your career ambitions growing up?

To be honest my initial interest was in politics. That was short lived when mortgages and family commitments came along!! I still retain a keen interest in that area. You never know perhaps I have a second career in me yet!

## Can you outline your career path?

After leaving University I applied to most of the major accounting firms. That threw up the first career choice. Whether to join Price Waterhouse in Newcastle or KPMG in Manchester. The draw of the North East and family brought me back here.

After qualifying I joined the PW Corporate Finance department in 1993. After an enjoyable 10 years with PW I moved to Deloitte as Director of their Corporate Finance business in Newcastle in 2000, helping to establish what was a fledgling business at that time and building a great team.

In 2007 Begbies Traynor asked me to assist them with developing a new service line both in Newcastle and in their wider business so I joined as a partner.

I recall the first year both recruiting the team and enjoying some early successes such as sale of the largest independent pharmacy group in the North East, HF Healthcare to Alliance Boots, the sale of Heighley Gate to Wyevale, the acquisition of Arthouse for a private equity investor and many other great deals.

Then 2008 arrived. The run on the banks. M&A activity crashed and the Corporate Finance world changed for a few years. That was a challenging time and has helped prepare me for running my own business.

In 2013 Cavu Corporate Finance was established. The model is simple – we are totally focussed on delivering high quality advice to clients. We transact deals in the £2m to £100m space with most of our work in the £5m to £50m arena. Outstanding client service and delivering exceptional outcomes for clients are our primary aims irrespective of the deal size.

After 3 years of trading we have enjoyed some great successes. Recently (pre summer) we raised £25m of private equity for local business Fairstone - Fairstone is expanding quickly and it was a pleasure to work with the CEO, Lee

Hartley, and his management team. We have been active with other clients raising £7.5m of equity for J&B Recycling based in Hartlepool, £5m of equity for Cussins Homes, leading on the sale of GB Lubricants and Action Can and we were delighted to act for the management team who acquired the Pen Shop. Our clients are our biggest advocates so my ongoing thanks to them all.

I think that journey has made me more rounded. As an owner of a business I feel totally aligned with our clients. I have experienced the top and the bottom of the market and we bring that wealth of experience to all client situations, tailoring every piece of advice to the specific client needs.

## Describe a typical day

You read these pieces and everyone says "Most days start at 5.30am followed by a visit to the gym". I think that occasionally but most days actually start at 6.45am and I tend to go straight to the office. One of these days I will hit the gym before going to work.

I tend to catch up on client e-mails before 8am. Some clients like to talk early in the day, pre 8am.

One of the things I love is very few days are the same. I will meet clients, potential clients, funders and discuss with the team specific matters relating to client projects. I also like to have time carved out to think...it's easy in a project based business to be active but corporate finance is about original thought - no two scenarios are the same - so finding time to innovate and consider key transactions decisions is vital to the success of projects and to client outcomes.

At the back end of each day that thought about the gym usually rears its head again.

Most weeks I do like to run - it clears the mind and de stresses you - 3 runs ideally, 2 some weeks if work is heavy. I have taken to cycling recently having been talked into cycling 150 miles in 2 days for Prostate Cancer.

## Can you tell us what you are currently working on?

I could but I would have a few irate clients! Confidentiality and integrity are the fundamentals in our sector.

Needless to say we are working on a range of projects - sale mandates, acquisitions and equity funding.

## Summarise your greatest business achievement to date

That is difficult.

Personally I enjoy selling businesses - the tangible value we add can be demonstrated when prices increase from buyers as a result of our involvement.

I have sold many businesses over the years and delivered some great deals for clients. It would seem wrong to pick one over the many we have worked on.

For me the achievement is about how the client feels about it after the deal - and on that front we have had many happy clients.

## What's the best advice you have been given?

Bill Teasdale (ex PwC) - "you have to enjoy the journey" - that is true you have to enjoy what you do - so thanks Bill that was and remains great advice.

I worked with the late John Wall for many years. John was a real character and preached the virtue of tenacity. Corporate Finance is really about being tenacious - when things are not going as well as you would like, do you have the staying power to bring buyers and sellers together in an environment where everyone remains happy with the deal.

## Who are your heroes?

I do not really go for all that.

## What motivates you?

Doing a great job for clients - that has driven me on over all my career. My family.

## How do you relax?

With family and friends mainly in Corbridge where I live. I run and cycle. Walk with my wife, Fiona and our retriever Max. Last month you would have found Max and I on the top of the Cheviot. Fiona decided to give that walk a miss!!!

## How will you be remembered?

An easy-going bloke who did a great job for his clients and loved his family.



# EXCLUSIVE

## BREXIT, The Big Irish Gateway and Business War Games

A compelling lunch event hosted with kind thanks by Muckle LLP

Over 50 key business figures from around the region, London, Manchester and Birmingham joined us for two very different, but equally thought provoking presentations. David D'Alton, UK Consultant Director of the British Irish Chamber outlined the benefits of trading with Ireland for a post BREXIT UK and the North East in particular. Chris Paton of Quirk Solutions held the room in awe as he explained how his experiences in Afghanistan had led him to develop the tools of Business War Gaming.



## Bang & Olufsen Yarm, unveiled their new showroom with LEADR TV



Exclusive Business were delighted to be amongst the first to use the brand new, state of the art Bang & Olufsen showroom on Yarm High Street. Guests joined us from around the region and canapés were provided by Osaki of the Lotus Lounge, Yarm. Matthew Scott of LEADR TV co-opted 7 willing victims to film a 60 second thought leadership video. Our youngest participant was just 16 and his wisdom surprised us all.

**Date for your diary** - Business War Games Strategy Dinner Monday 30th January 2017 at St Mary's Heritage Centre to book - email [team@exclusive.co.com](mailto:team@exclusive.co.com)







# E CLUSIVE

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B U S I N E S S

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## Exclusive up-coming events

### 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

Enjoy a day of great Irish craic on St Patricks Day, live racing from Cheltenham, a full program of Irish entertainment, 3 course lunch, tipster and tote and a drop or two of the black stuff. Our charity partner is Marie Curie Newcastle

To book contact [team@exclusive.co.com](mailto:team@exclusive.co.com)

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## THE NORTH EAST ENTREPRENEURIAL AWARDS

North East entrepreneurial spirit recognised at the 2016 Entrepreneurs' Forum awards. The Entrepreneur's Forum has recognised the achievements of four of the region's most successful business people at the North East Entrepreneurial Awards.

The annual awards dinner, the first event to be hosted in the Crowne Plaza Newcastle's newly refurbished Boiler Shop, was held in partnership with the North East LEP and is the highlight of the Entrepreneurs' Forum's calendar of events. The group is made up of more than 300 leaders of high-growth North East businesses, who employ over 23,000 people and have a collective turnover of in excess of £2.3 billion.

The evening was hosted by comedian Jason Cook, creator and star of the hit BBC2 comedy Hebburn, and the after-dinner speech was given by adventurer and part-time superhero Jamie McDonald.

John Waterworth, chief executive of Gosforth-based Parkdean Resorts was named Entrepreneur of the Year, a much coveted accolade sponsored by Ward Hadaway. During the last 12 months John has created the first truly nationwide holiday park business following a near £1bn merger with Park Resorts in November and an acquisition in July. With a turnover of £401m, Parkdean Resorts was recently ranked 29th in the Sunday Times Grant Thornton Top Track 250.

James Robson of business advisory firm Alexander Jewitt & Co., was named Mentor of the Year. James is chairman of chemical processing firm Exwold and a member of the Entrepreneurs' Forum board. The organisation holds regular mentoring sessions

to help business owners grow their companies by passing on advice and experience.

John Savage, managing director of growing North East trade retailers Flame Heating Spares, was presented with the Emerging Talent Award. The rapidly growing firm has five branches across the region after just four years of trading; and has hugely ambitious growth plans. The award, sponsored by United Carlton, is presented to an Entrepreneur who has been in business for six years or less.

John Fenwick, of Fenwicks Limited, was presented with the Lifetime Award. He stepped down as deputy chairman of the company in 2013 after 50 years with the business. John Fenwick is often regarded as the man behind the growth of the UK's largest independent department store group and hailed as the genius behind the much heralded flagship Newcastle store's Christmas window displays.

Entrepreneurs' Forum chairman Nigel Mills said: "High-growth businesses are providing the jobs and prosperity that our region needs. We present these awards not only to recognise success, but to thank entrepreneurs who help others to build their businesses. By working together and sharing the benefits of our collective experience, we continue to make business a force for social good in the North East."

John Waterworth said: "I'm proud of what we have built. I have a wonderful group of people who have helped me grow the business. We've got an expanding team, in the hundreds, having started from five people in Newcastle. I've also had a number of great mentors."

James Robson said: "I strongly believe in supporting other entrepreneurs. Small businesses are the lifeblood of the economy and to be recognised as Mentor of the Year by the Entrepreneurs' Forum is a significant personal achievement. I would 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."

John Savage said: "It has been another record year for Flame, which wouldn't have been possible without the support of my colleagues, our loyal trade partners and customers. I am extremely proud to have been recognised within the North East business community, which was unexpected, and I would like to thank the Entrepreneurs' Forum for presenting me with this award."

John Fenwick said: "Thank you North East Entrepreneurs for having presented me with the Lifetime Achievement Award. It would not have been possible without the wonderful team of staff I lead. I am flattered."

The Entrepreneurs' Forum supports aspirational North East business owners in all sectors, helping to grow their networks, improve leadership skills, share experience, create new opportunities and scale-up their business. For more information, call 0191 500 7780 or visit [www.entrepreneursforum.net](http://www.entrepreneursforum.net)



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John Burns 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](http://www.entrepreneursforum.net)



# JOHN BURNS

## Diamond Group

From founding a photocopier repair business in 1992, John Burns created the Diamond Group, which provides IT, communications, photocopiers and financial services, all from its office in the Team Valley. Still going strong 24 years later, John shows no signs of slowing down and has ambitious plans for growth. His business operates nationally and has recently been supported by the Let's Grow Fund.

### So tell me a bit about your background

I remember getting in trouble with my mother when I was at school when she opened the kitchen cupboard to find that she had no sugar or vinegar left. I'd been making toffee cakes and selling them to my mates. So I suppose I've always had an entrepreneurial spirit!

I left school in 1975 with little in terms of qualifications and worked in a factory and office jobs. Knowing this wasn't what I wanted I went to college to study electronics and trained to be a typewriter engineer, I progressed onto working with fax machines and printers, before becoming a service manager, overseeing all aspects of service and customer service. I left the company in 1992 to set up Diamond Business Systems.

### What was your first business premises?

Diamond Business Systems' first office was my spare bedroom, with the workshop in the garage. We started with a second hand photocopier which I bought for £25, I refurbished it and sold it for £300.

Within the first year turnover for the company was at £100,000 with around £50,000 profit, after five years the company turned over half a million but profit had reduced to £25,000, this was a major business learning curve.

In 1994 Diamond Business Systems moved to a small unit within an enterprise zone, situated next door to a pizza store. The pizza store caught fire and the blaze spread to our premises. This was devastating at the time, but resulted in us moving to a larger premises on the same estate, so I suppose it had a silver lining. Due to growth in the company, we moved to Blacks Corner, Boldon to gain a prominent position within the local area.

The early 2000s marked the digitisation of the photocopier industry, for Diamond Business Systems this meant that we had to engage with IT companies on a regular basis. I was spending around £20,000 - £30,000 a year on IT, and through this I found a business partner who was working in IT, and we formed Diamond IT in 2006.

### Did the recession change your approach to business?

Like every company we tightened our belts, but in one way the recession didn't affect the business as you might expect, service of existing equipment is more profitable than selling replacements, so customers wanting to repair their existing machines rather than purchasing new equipment was advantageous for the company.

The recession, however, did bring a difficulty in gaining finance for consumers, money had been lent freely previously but it got a lot stricter at this point. Diamond Business Systems had an efficient cash flow at this point in time, therefore we set up Diamond Asset Finance LLP, enabling us to provide customers with finance under the Diamond Group name which is a major selling point for us.

### How has the market changed since you started?

Telecoms and IT are increasingly closely linked now. More and more people are looking towards telecoms based on Voice Over IP. This means giving full technology service to small businesses, doing the whole lot for them, rather than them going to a number of different suppliers. Security is a hugely important part of our IT business now, the need for every organisation from the smallest companies up to large multinationals and government departments to take this seriously cannot be underestimated.

### What do you think the next big trend will be?

It's got to be the availability of better connectivity, there are a lot of business parks where the broadband speed is terrible. When communications infrastructure on these sites is improved the companies there will move towards hosted VOIP services too. The availability of suitable broadband is a deciding factor for many businesses when choosing premises, which is going to shape the economic map of the region for the duration because it's not available everywhere.

### What would you say your unique selling points are?

We have two main USPs, our customer focus and our completed offering from one provider under one roof. We're large enough to provide the highest quality of support to all of our customers, and small enough to know them well and understand their needs. Offering communications, photocopiers and IT all together, along with finance packages to pay for it, we remove the pain and stress of the customer trying to do it all themselves.

### How do you keep everyone at Diamond motivated?

I believe in sharing everything with our staff, this includes successes, failures, future goals and aspirations. During Diamond open days, all members of staff get involved in telling people about the company, from our receptionists to our engineers, we are a team and that's what Diamond prides itself on.

Recognition is also a key motivator at Diamond, I believe in recognising individuals for their good work. We reward each team member in a way which is tailored to them as an individual. Some employees prefer financial rewards, whereas others prefer to be recognised in other ways.

### How does mentoring feature in your business?

Personally I do bits of mentoring, I am registered as a Prince's Trust mentor, I am also available to support people through the Entrepreneurs' Forum. We are also looking to do more training with the Diamond Group, we've got two apprentices now.

### What are your future plans?

My main plan for the future is growth, over the next three years we plan to take on 20 employees, as well as possible acquisitions of copier and IT companies. In the long term I would like to develop our existing staff, so eventually I would be able to take a back seat, if I wanted. I don't see me going anywhere for a few years though. As the business continues to grow I would like to help my fellow directors to develop, so we can stay ahead of the game.



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## BACK IN THE TRENCHES

The best, most versatile and on-trend trench coats are hard to come by, so intú Metrocentre's stylist Michaela Dale has done the hard work for you and rounded up the best new season designer and high street styles available in the Metrocentre right now.

The English trench coat is a timeless classic that has been around for many years and was created by Thomas Burberry, who designed an all-weather coat for soldiers fighting in the trenches of the First World War.

Topping the charts as a favourite coat for both men and women, the trench coat now appears in many fabrics - not just waterproof ones - although, if our damp British summer is anything to go by, rain repellent fabrics may help...

The best trench coats come in all shapes and sizes, from neutral shades in classic shapes to stand-out, textured and colourful styles, guaranteed to liven up your workwear wardrobe.

For a classic workwear look, opt for a well-designed double breasted shape that is elegant, modern, flattering and belted at the waist. Navy, grey or beige are firm favourites from season to season. However, a trench in red or this season's neutral khaki is more fashion forward and gives a twist on the classic style.

When searching for the perfect trench coat, make sure to try different styles on with your workwear. If the coat is to be worn over a jacket, then make sure it layers well and fits over the shoulders.

There are some great petite and tall options at intú Metrocentre, so your new trench can be the perfect length to suit you, looking great over everything from skirts and trousers to blouses and dresses.

If you embrace this utility trend you will discover a classic, ultra-flattering design that will be a staple piece in your workwear wardrobe, whatever the season.





## IT'S TIME TO BRIDGE THE GENDER PAY GAP

Bryony Gibson, Managing Director of Bryony Gibson Consulting, shares her thoughts on the UK's gender pay gap and why we need to help more women rise to the top in business.

Closing the gender pay gap has found itself centre stage once again following the release of Deloitte's latest salary analysis.

The report concluded that the difference in remuneration stands, on average, at 9.4%, which doesn't come as too much of a surprise. What has got people talking however is, despite all the progress made in recent years, the current rate of change means the UK won't see equality until 2069.

Combine this with the fact that 47% of the UK's workforce is female and the same research discovered no difference in starting salary between sexes, and this is clearly an issue we need to address now.

A lot has been written about the pay gap and a lack of women reaching top management and boardroom positions. And yes, there are a lot of complicated factors that contribute toward this, but in truth, I think many of the issues could be improved if we could just change our outdated focus on the importance of hours rather than impact, and the emphasis we place upon women to be the ones who blend their career with a family.

Most of the professional business women I meet either combine their career with supporting a family, or hope to do so in the future. While the same can also be said for the men, for some reason

it never seems to be a conversation we have.

Despite changes to paternity law, the balance of care hasn't shifted and it is women who continue to grow up expecting to make compromises for the privilege of having a family; creating a natural barrier to career progression that most companies see as an impending problem rather than the opportunity it could be.

If you think of it another way: girls consistently out-score boys in almost every subject academically; they tend to be better at emotional empathy than men, generally speaking, so they should make good managers and leaders as this helps to foster rapport and build chemistry; they also often juggle a busy home life with work, keeping many balls successfully in the air. Aren't these exactly the kind of skills you want to see in your staff?

By bringing together different personalities, perspectives and life experiences, you build better teams and the evidence of countless studies suggest that those with more women perform better; so isn't it time we starting embracing the value women can bring to the workplace?

If you can adapt the working environment to make it a more welcoming and enjoyable place for everyone, not just those who work long hours, it would allow more women to thrive at every stage of their career and bring with it huge benefits.

A few simple ways to do this include:

- Providing role models and mentoring for women, as this will not only help to inspire them, but will also ensure they believe that they can drive their career forward regardless of family status.
- Continue to invest in skills for part-time workers.
- Pro-actively celebrate staff who have made a positive impact on the business, regardless of the hours they work.
- Take time to get to know employees better and be supportive of their out-of-work commitments.
- Offer flexible working conditions.
- Trust more. If someone is good at their job and knows what you expect, give them the autonomy to deliver results within your time frame, but in their own way.

It seems strange to me that organisations aren't actively looking to support and encourage women to both rise to the top and have a family. By being better equipped to cater for their personal needs you would not only build strong loyalty in your staff, but it would go a long way to bringing out the best in all of them.

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# WHY IS DEVELOPER PAY SO HIGH AND WHAT DOES THAT HAVE TO DO WITH BANANAS?

BY James Blackwell, CEO, Ronald James



Over the last year, the average salary for a .NET developer in Newcastle has risen by 26%, and it's still rising. Of course, this is fantastic news for developers looking for a job; but it's rather less positive for any firms requiring these in-demand skills. So let's consider what might be behind this astonishing increase in pay.

**Forget, for just a few moments, that you're a hiring manager looking for the next great developer for the business. Imagine instead that you would like to buy a banana.**

In normal circumstances, bananas are cheap. You can walk into any supermarket or corner shop in the North-East and pick one up for a few pence. That's because bananas are plentiful, and there are more than enough for everyone who would like to buy one.

What would happen, however, if so many people wanted to buy bananas that they were suddenly in short supply? The North-East of England would be plunged into a "Great Banana Crisis" (we can see the Daily Mail headlines now). People are queuing in shops, demanding their share of perfectly curved, symmetrical, yellow bananas, prepared to pay whatever it takes to get what they want.

In the "Great Banana Crisis of 2016" the price of

bananas has sky-rocketed; all because demand cannot keep up with supply.

The best bananas, those which command the highest prices, are only affordable for those consumers with the very deepest pockets. The rest have to make do with bananas that may be past their best. Or they may be forced to buy green bananas and invest considerable time and energy in nurturing them until they are ripe.

## **How does this relate to developer salaries?**

So, we have just described the basic laws of supply and demand. And, clearly, developers are a product in just the same way as bananas. Anyone who lives or works in the area will know that, in recent years, Newcastle has seen an explosion in the number of digital technology companies.

This fact, and the correspondingly dramatic increase in demand for developers in the area, has driven the increase in salary levels. And to continue the

analogy (to the point of distraction perhaps), many firms are being forced to on-board developers who are perhaps past their prime and bored with riding the next great technology wave. Not the perfect profile of a motivated team player although they may have the advantage of experience.

Alternatively, others are settling for green developers with nominal levels of experience in .NET and other sought-after technologies. With this compromise comes a long term commitment to training and internal support as they come up to speed with the realities of a commercial development environment. You may end up with a loyal, perfectly-formed developer. Or a first rate development diva with little loyalty and marketable skills gained at your expense.

Whilst the graduate output should, in the longer term, resolve the imbalance, vacancy rates at the ever-increasing number of Newcastle tech start-ups continue to rise and developer pay shows no sign of coming down anytime soon.

If you would like any more advice on how to attract Developers to your business feel free to get in touch.  
james@ronaldjamesgroup.com or call 0191 3006501



# MEASURING RISK WITHIN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA



The United States of America (USA) is the second most visited country in the world, with approx. 75 million international travellers entering the country annually. The USA has a highly developed law enforcement system and National Security Infrastructure, which is currently experiencing a period of increased tension due to sociological matters. The most common risks as with other largely populated global regions, that international travellers encounter is the risk of opportunist and organised activities of petty crime (particularly in heavily populated tourist driven areas). Additionally, due to the geographic location environmental threats such as heavy snowfall, severe storms and extreme seasonal conditions can be a cause of greater concern.

## Environmental Risk

Take Hurricane Matthew as an example, an extreme but frequent and sometimes predictable weather event normally occurring along the southern and eastern coastlines. Hurricanes are just one of many extreme but frequent weather activities, and the general hurricane season attacks the coastal regions between 1st June to 30th November, however peak periods rise between August to September. Business travellers must be aware of the considerable personal risks during these times when visiting these areas and the possible risk of injury or loss of life is categorised as high to critical. So organisations and travellers must assess their company policies in order to establish whether travel during these peak environmental periods is justified and that they have taken the necessary precautions.

The social and economic impact of Hurricane Matthew was catastrophic. This disaster took the lives of over 1000 people in storm hit Haiti, Florida and North Carolina and is estimated to cost the US economy around \$10 billion.

The image above shows the various environmental threats and regional impact zones, and this is a simple risk management aid that organisations can utilise when analysing potential risks to their travellers.

## Political & Social Risk

As the eyes of the world are watching and wondering who will be the next President of the USA, this period offers additional international risks from both candidacy parties and their supporters.

Due to the current social diversity, many regional protests have occurred throughout the country and many becoming increasingly violent. It is clear though that whomever wins the Presidential race they are going to have both domestic and international security and risk matters to contend with. Business travellers and organisations must now determine how they will mitigate future and potential risk to their corporate travellers, assets and business ventures.

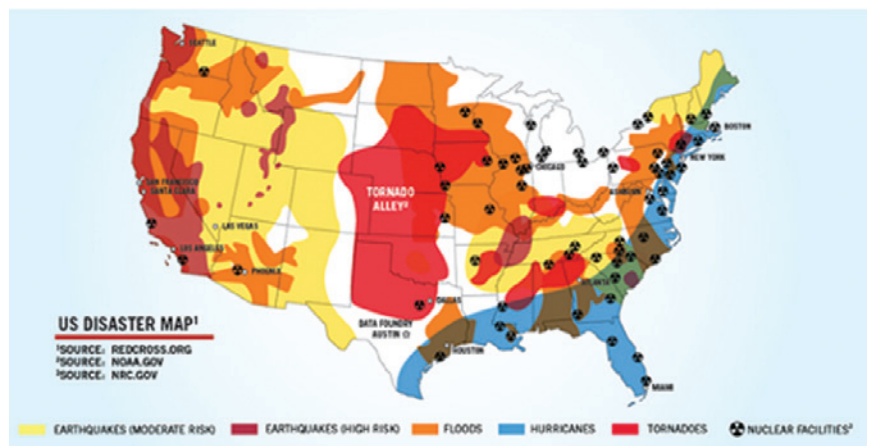
## Global Statistics

According to the World Economic Forum (WEF) the USA lies 73rd in the world rankings as one of the safest countries, this ranking has been affected by the growing concerns and repercussions of both political and military interventions throughout

the Middle East, African continent and the current tensions between the US and Russia.

## Summary

International playground, world business capital or just the land of the free, the United States of America has an affluent, multi-cultural and innovative society and is the 'land of opportunity'. Business travellers and their organisations that they are employed within, must carefully select what their appetite for risk actually is! Every person and organisation will have different opinions and views of what will impact their business travels and operations, and many are completely (and unaware) naive. In today's ever changing business environment the choice is yours.







## STEAK OUT

Jack Grahamslaw visits Hotel Indigo's Marco Pierre White Steakhouse Bar & Grill

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What better way to round off the working week than with a steak meal at one of the top places in town? Since opening up in 2012 to widespread intrigue and acclaim, the restaurant's attractive offering of fine wine, stunning seafood, and signature steaks became a real hit with punters and has remained a firm favourite ever since.





Observing a bustling lunchtime trade, there was certainly no sign of Brexit uncertainty when we rocked up recently with the restaurant seemingly going from strength to strength. Unsurprisingly, the eponymous Marco wasn't around (He visits a couple of times a year) although we were warmly received by old friend and Restaurant Manager Bruno.

We soon settled into our snug corner booth and tucked into some warmed artisan breads before briefing Bruno on our discerning wine preferences - "erm, we like it." He recommended accordingly (!), and whilst getting acquainted with an excellent bottle of Malbec, we reflected upon our surroundings. Consistent with the Hotel in which it inhabits, the restaurant packs style in abundance. Characterised by block shades of chocolate, green and tortilla-brown, the décor is sleek, contemporary and tastefully restrained. Bar a couple of brooding, monochrome images of the "Godfather of modern cooking" it is removed of any unnecessary embellishments. It's the food which assumes centre stage.

We chose from the a la carte menu which, punctuated by moments of real culinary brilliance, is shaped around a varied selection of tastes,

textures and cuisines. Given the celebrity-chef endorsement there's a certain emphasis on British cooking and grande cuisine yet there's also burgers, salads and curries which means there's something to be found for even the pickiest of palettes. In addition to this, there's even a few signposts from the man himself, see "Marco's Lobster Macaroni", "Pork Belly Marco Polo" or "The Governor's Fish & Chips" – all of which left us salivating.

The first dishes to enter the fray were a Crispy Calamari with Sauce tartare for me and a Severn & Wye Smoked Salmon dish for my dining companion. Some serious artistic flair was demonstrated by the kitchen as the Salmon was cut to exactly the same size as the circumference of the plate before being exuberantly garnished with shallots, capers and pickled cucumbers. Quite the work of art!

Meanwhile my calamari, so often served as tough as a new five pound note, was actually really tender and arrived encased in a flaky, golden batter.

Thus fortified, we moved on to the main event. Ordering the same dish as your partner is probably a cardinal sin in the world of food reviews (getting sacked in the morning) however the Main Course at a Marco Pierre White Steakhouse was always

a pre-destined one for me. I mean, can you really leave without sampling the 8oz fillet steak? We didn't think so. Cooked expertly to the vivid pink of medium, our steaks will live long in the memory. That heady blend of steak, sauce and wine all melting in together so majestically. This came accompanied by a portion of homemade pommes frites, a merlot-dressed green salad and grilled tomatoes whilst a pairing of onion rings and wilted baby spinach made for a nice couple of bits on the side. I think it's the intensity of the flavours which really strike you at Marco Pierre White and Bruno, who swept over to recharge our glasses, explained that the MPW Peppercorn Sauce is a slight variation on what we'd previously encountered. Made with Worcestershire Sauce and a generous slug of Port, it was a real revelation. I hope Wor Lass is taking note!

With a few loose ends to tie up at the office we body-swerved dessert although we did agree over a quick coffee what a fantastic venue we chose for a business lunch. For a quiet corner of Fenkle street there's a palpable buzz about the place and it's easy to see why. Sumptuous food, snappy service and a swanky interior, I'm sure the man on the walls watching over everything would be proud.





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Mark Ions believes in taking a very different approach to recruitment and HR services. As his award-winning business Exclusive Ltd celebrates a UK-wide client base and nine successful years in business, he tells us what makes it unique.

### HOW DID YOU START UP EXCLUSIVE?

After nearly ten years working in recruitment my values had shifted and no longer aligned with working for big recruitment agencies, where filling seats and hitting short term targets counted for more than people. I knew I could give a better, more personal service.

Since I set up Exclusive Recruitment and HR consultancy in 2007 we've grown into a business with offices in Leeds and Scotland, a client base made up of leading businesses and brands, and a 10-strong team. The business has two strands - the first is an expert permanent, temporary and search project recruitment service across a range of specialist areas including, HR, professional services, engineering and technical, and executive search. The second strand is HR consultancy services ranging from HR change projects, outplacement and professional development coaching, HR for SMEs through to employee engagement and leadership and management.

We are constantly pushing what's possible and developing new models that deliver what our clients need and which save them time and money, such as a new and collaborative Onsite Partner Model we developed specifically for Nissan, which sees our staff embedded on their site and becoming part of their in-house team.

### WHAT MAKES YOUR APPROACH UNIQUE?

Clients tell us that one of the reasons they work with us is our strong business ethics, and an approach based on trust. I believe in honest, long-standing relationships, and I like to be able to look at myself in the mirror and know that I did the right thing.

Our website contains a first for the recruitment and HR industry - independently hosted and unedited reviews of our service by real people. We want to be honest, and we hide nothing and with over 220 reviews we are demonstrating that we are open, transparent and keen to see how we can improve.

You can't run a successful business without the right people in place, supported by a strong HR framework, so by doing a good job for our clients we add value to their business and that's our end goal.

### HOW DO YOU BALANCE WORK WITH FAMILY LIFE?

My wife Jen also works in the business as our finance director, and we live with our three sons on the coast in Whitley Bay. Investing in the best IT and technology systems in the industry means we can work from anywhere, and we recently relocated our head office to the town to be part of its £36m regeneration. It's a move that has proved popular with clients and it means we can see our sons' school from the office windows, which makes juggling childcare a whole lot easier than it was. Life is hectic, but I wouldn't have it any other way.

### HOW IMPORTANT IS CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY TO YOU?

I'm a firm believer in putting something back into society, and for the past six years I've been a board director for Newcastle-based HealthWORKS, which works to combat the high levels of poor health found in certain areas of our region.

Just a few months after launching Exclusive I was

diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes and I've been on the UK Advisory Council for Diabetes UK, which does some great work supporting people with the condition. I've also been a business mentor for the Prince's Trust, meeting and guiding fledgling companies, and I'm actively involved in the Entrepreneurs' Forum in the North East and the Institute of Directors 99.

Here in Whitley Bay we've created jobs, a small business hub for local SMEs and support our community by using local suppliers. We operate on family-friendly policies to help all the team achieve a good work-life balance and were delighted to be named Business of the Year in the 2013 North East Culture for Success Awards, demonstrating an exceptional working culture.

We also sponsor the CIPD North East of England Legal Update events and for the last nine years have run a very successful HR Directors Forum, sharing best practice among industry leaders and operating under Chatham house rules. We are also in the process of launching a new HR Practitioners Forum.

### WHAT'S BEEN YOUR CAREER HIGHLIGHT?

In some respects I see it as a highlight every time a new client chooses to work with us. We don't believe in resting on our laurels, but the majority of new clients come via referrals, which is a good indicator that we're getting it right. I probably have two career highlights. The first would be creating our Onsite Partner Model, and the second would be relocating to Whitley Bay. I'm passionate about the area we live and work in and feel proud to be in a position to help drive the town's prosperity.





*“Every company says  
they’re different, but  
at Exclusive we are.  
Honest.”*

# PREGNANCY AND MATERNITY DISCRIMINATION ON THE RISE



Sarah Fitzpatrick

In the UK, pregnancy and maternity is one of the protected characteristics covered by the Equality Act 2010. This means that it is unlawful for an employer to discriminate against a woman because of pregnancy, pregnancy-related sickness or maternity leave.

However, the Women and Equalities Committee has published a report on pregnancy and maternity discrimination showing that the number of expectant and new mothers forced to leave their jobs has almost doubled since 2005.

This report comes not long after Citizens Advice reported a 58% rise in the number of women seeking advice about maternity leave issues. According to Citizens Advice, the most common issues affecting women returning from maternity leave were being made redundant, suffering a reduction of hours, having a role change imposed on them or being moved to a zero hours' contract.

## Recommendations

The Women and Equalities Committee report calls for women in the UK to have protections similar to those in Germany where from the beginning of pregnancy until four months following childbirth, employers can only dismiss an employee in very rare circumstances and need government approval to do so.

Other recommendations include:

- A substantial reduction in fees for women bringing pregnancy-related discrimination cases to an employment tribunal. The report acknowledges that the introduction of fees has had a significant adverse impact on access to justice.
- Increasing the three-month limit on taking pregnancy and maternity related discrimination cases to the tribunal to six months. The government previously stated in its response to the Equality and Human Right Committee pregnancy and maternity discrimination report that it will not introduce a six-month limit.
- Increasing protection for casual, agency and zero-hours workers. For example, the right to paid time off for antenatal appointment to be extended to workers.
- Protection from redundancy until six months after a return to work.
- The Government should set out ambitious targets for reducing the level of pregnancy and maternity discrimination within the next two years.

Business Minister Margot James has said that the government will respond in "due course".

## Advice

It is unlawful for an employer to treat an employee less favourably because they are pregnant, have a pregnancy-related illness or are on maternity. There is some further protection in that if there is suitable alternative role available a woman on maternity leave should be offered that role in priority to colleagues, but this does not require an employer to create a job for women on maternity leave. Therefore employers can lawfully make a woman who is pregnant or on maternity leave redundant providing that the correct procedures are followed and the reason for her redundancy is not related to pregnancy or maternity leave.

Compensation in discrimination claims is uncapped in the Employment Tribunal. Employers looking to dismiss or make changes to contracts of employees who are in the protected period (beginning of pregnancy to end of maternity leave) should always seek legal advice.

If you require any advice or assistance on pregnancy or maternity discrimination related issues, please contact me on 0191 282 2888 or at [sarah.fitzpatrick@collingwoodlegal.com](mailto:sarah.fitzpatrick@collingwoodlegal.com)



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YOUR EYE ON THE REGION

## Jason Wainwright

Managing Partner, Muckle LLP

### Did you grow up in the North East or did you decide to relocate here in later life?

I grew up in Rugeley, a mining town in Staffordshire about 30 miles north of Birmingham. I moved to the North East in 2000 after working in Sheffield, Birmingham and London, initially working as an in-house lawyer at Arriva plc and then moving to Muckle LLP as a partner in 2005.

### What do you think it means to be a businessperson in the North East of England?

The business community in the North East is close-knit and more manageable in terms of networking when compared to places like Birmingham and London. This means we get to develop deeper relationships with our clients, business partners and fellow law firms obtaining a better understanding of their challenges. The atmosphere is a bit more relaxed than other cities and I think that compared to many places you are judged on "efforts and passion" as much as obvious success.

The atmosphere amongst the business community is generally more relaxed with less airs-and-graces. This appeals to me as a person and is why, I think, Muckle LLP is well-regarded in the business community. We ensure that we actively recruit lawyers and other people who are down-to-earth, pragmatic and have a sense of humour and absolutely buck against the traditional view of stuffy lawyers in suits. Our people work at Muckle LLP because we are not like a traditional law firm. Our people are fantastic at what they do and always aim to provide high-quality, accessible legal support to businesses.

### What is your favourite aspect of life in the North East?

Living close to a city, fantastic countryside and a stone's throw from the beach is the perfect combination giving access to most things anyone could ever want for a balanced life.

### Do you have a favourite hotspot for a business meeting?

Even though we have fantastic office facilities in central Newcastle I prefer to meet clients away from the office. I tend to have a lot of meetings in Central Bean or Bealim House. Great coffee, food and

surroundings and very close to the office. People are often more relaxed and more themselves on "neutral" territory.

### Where do you like to eat out in the region?

I really like Blackfriars. For me, it's the perfect mix of high-quality food and surroundings without being at all pretentious. It's also in a fascinating building/location too in an historic part of the city.

### Where do you like to unwind within the North East?

Along the seafront between Whitley Bay and St Mary's Lighthouse with a cup of coffee at Rendezvous Café after walking the dog.

### Are the people really friendlier?

Yes, I think so. More than that they generally have a better sense of humour and are more honest which all leads to a friendlier, more relaxed atmosphere.

### What do you think is the best view in the North East?

I love Holy Island and the view as you approach along the causeway. I have a bizarre fascination for islands and island life and isolation.

### Do you think living and working in the North East offers the same opportunities as elsewhere in the UK?

It certainly can do. The North East has strong, innovative industries and a strong sense of independence and willpower. We need to continue to create opportunities for people from here to develop their careers in the North East. The real advantage for the North East is that people from here are fiercely proud of it and it takes a lot for them to decide to leave the area.

### Have you had an experience of working elsewhere and how did it compare?

I have worked in Sheffield, Birmingham and London before coming to the North East. All of these cities have their positives but at the end of the day, in my view, they don't have that combination of coastline, stunning countryside and a city with pretty much everything you could ever need.

[www.muckle-llp.com](http://www.muckle-llp.com)



## DIVORCE – KNOW YOUR OPTIONS

Louise Cannell-Mirza, Solicitor in the Family law team at Ward Hadaway, looks at the various pathways to separation which couples can take.

**The breakdown of a relationship is hard enough - the task of formalising the ending of the relationship, resolving the marital finances and/or the care arrangements for the children does not have to be as traumatic.**

At Ward Hadaway we promote and advise on a wide range of options available to separating couples so clients do not have to become embroiled in contentious court proceedings.

### Mediation

Mediation is discussed in all cases, not only in terms of trying to save relationships, but to also help the parties navigate towards a settlement of the marital finances and any disputes regarding children.

Mediation is a forum in which both parties will come together in a neutral environment with a trained mediator to negotiate towards agreement. The mediator is impartial but fully trained and able to guide parties towards an agreement that works for everyone.

### Collaborative law

This is a process whereby parties come together with their lawyers, to reach agreements outside of the court forum.

It can be used effectively to allow parties to discuss and agree legal and practical matters arising from their separation, retaining control over the outcome and timescales.

It also helps enable a relationship to be maintained afterwards especially if parties have children.

Both parties are represented by specially trained lawyers who will work with parties and each other towards an amicable agreement.

This involves a series of meetings between lawyers and parties who all sign a participation agreement confirming their commitment to resolving matters without going to Court.

### Arbitration

Arbitration is increasingly used in financial disputes and, as of July 2016, can be used in disputes regarding children. This involves both parties agreeing to refer matters to an independent arbitrator to make a decision that is both final and binding.

Arbitration comes with a great deal of flexibility and less formality than court proceedings.

Parties can choose the arbitrator to appoint along with the date and venue for the arbitration hearing. This enables issues to be resolved more quickly and can be less costly than court proceedings.

Some cases do require court intervention, however, at Ward Hadaway we remain committed to working with clients to consider all options and choosing a bespoke pathway towards effective and efficient resolution of family disputes.



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## SPECTACLES AND PRIVACY IN A SNAPSHOT

Spectacles, the newly announced wearable technology gadget from Snap Inc. (formerly Snapchat), allow a user to record up to 10 seconds of video at a time, which is stored on the device and can then be uploaded directly to the Snap site. The concept of wearable camera glasses has been around for years, its most infamous incarnation being the secretly filming Google Glass product which failed (among other reasons) due to the privacy concerns it raised.



When it comes to privacy, Spectacles are a step in the right direction. They have an outward-facing camera with a light on the front intended to alert people nearby that they are being filmed. That is an improvement on the Google Glass clandestine filming but not yet an ideal solution. Unlike with the young and the technology savvy, it cannot be assumed that an average person will be aware that when someone wearing hipster-looking, gleaming sunglasses is staring at them in the park, it means that they are being filmed. That awareness will follow, if the new technology is widely adopted but that is some time away. Just as it took time before everyone knew that a person who appeared to be talking to himself on the street was most likely using his mobile phone.

As with messages sent through the Snapchat mobile application, videos shot with Spectacles are not meant to last. Although one Snapchat user can transfer them from his Spectacles to the Snapchat application and share them with another user, the footage will, or (more accurately) is supposed to, irreversibly vanish after a few hours, so it should not end up in the public domain or in the hands of unintended recipients. You cannot "like" or publish comments on videos shared through Snapchat.

Therefore, it could be argued that, even if some unaware or unwilling stranger was caught on the footage, the momentary nature of these videos should fend off any privacy and data protection concerns.

Except that, firstly, as it came to light over the past few years, the conceptual impermanence of Snapchat was a selling philosophy rather than a fact, since it turned out to be technically possible to retrieve Snapchat videos from a user's device or catch and save them through another provider's app. The position under the English privacy law on filming people without their consent will depend on the circumstances. For example, in the case of clandestine filming of a person in their back garden, the mere fact of recording without permission may give rise to a claim for "misuse of private information" without the need for the footage to be published or shared with anyone else.

Secondly, momentary or not, it still is a recording (i.e. "data processing" in the language of the Data Protection Act) and making decisions on whether or not, and if so, who to share it with amounts to "controlling" personal data, hence the normal rules on data protection apply to such activities. Consequently, just as with videos made with traditional hand-held cameras or drones, the risk is

that a user of Spectacles may inadvertently assume the role of a data controller and all the obligations that come with that hat (such as the requirement to process information fairly and lawfully, or to keep it secure).

Are Spectacles then likely to share the fate of Google Glass? Not necessarily. At the end of the day, it is just a camera, so as long as users apply common sense when recording, they should be in no more danger of invading people's privacy than when using a hand-held device. Ideally, people appearing on the video should have given their consent to the recording. Where it is not reasonably practicable to get that consent, the camera user should assess the expectation of privacy by the people who will appear in the recording, taking into account such factors as the surroundings, the context, the age and vulnerability of the people, the likelihood of them being identified from the footage, and the intended use of the video (e.g. who with and for what purpose it is to be shared).

Public expectations with regards to privacy and technology are constantly changing, and the success of Spectacles, or similar products may depend on the cultural and legal outcomes of these changes.



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SOLICITORS

# MUCKLE LLP PICKS UP DOUBLE ACCOLADE FOR INVESTING IN ITS PEOPLE

The North East's leading law firm for businesses, Muckle LLP, has been recognised for its world-class approach to people development and management.

Muckle, based in Time Central, Newcastle, is the only law firm with a head office in the region, to hold the Investors in People Gold accreditation and the Investors in People Health and Wellness Award, both of which will be retained for three years.

The accolades reflect the efforts invested by Muckle to ensure its team feel supported, recognised and happy within their working environment.

Muckle's focus on providing a good work-life balance has been strengthened by its range of benefits and numerous activity clubs open for all its people to enjoy. This includes a weekly metafit class, walking/running/cycling groups and other classes provided by the firm.

The double Investors in People awards follow Muckle's success at the CIPD (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development) North East HR&D Awards, in June 2016, when they won the Health and Wellness Innovation Award.

The judging panel were impressed by Muckle's extensive range of events and benefits including its healthy living week and healthy breakfasts, offering personal health checks, providing maternity and work-life balance coaches and flexible working options. In addition an employee assistance programme and counselling support is offered and



health clubs and classes.

Claire Atkins, Director of HR at Muckle, said: "These awards and accreditations are thanks to the hard work and effort of everyone within the firm. We have a fantastic team of people at Muckle and it's so important to recognise and nurture that by providing a supportive environment in which people can develop.

"The health and wellbeing of everyone working

here at Muckle is really important to us and we will continue to invest in our people because a happy, healthy and motivated team also ensures we provide an excellent service to all our clients."

Muckle LLP was also recently voted Regional Law Firm of the Year at the Solicitors' Journal Awards, and is a three times winner of the Heart of the Community Award for Northumberland and Tyneside region.

T: 0191 211 7777 and advice@muckle-llp.com www.muckle-llp.com

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## FINAL HOME AT HILL TOP FARM



Only one home remains for sale at Dere Street Homes' exclusive Hill Top Farm development, located adjacent to Ramside Hall Hotel just outside Durham City.

The final home is Mill House on Plot Nine, a stunning three storey, five bedroom detached home which features an integral double garage, first floor living room and en-suite facilities to three of the five bedrooms.

A central hall leads into the rear-facing, double height Great Room with doors off to the Home Office, Cloakroom/WC and into the open plan Kitchen and Dining Area. A separate Boot/Utility Room off the Great Room has access to the double garage, a further WC and the rear garden with French doors from the dining room also providing access to the garden.

Stairs lead to the spacious galleried landing and

onto the magnificent first floor living room which enjoys stunning views over the neighbouring Golf Course. Bedrooms two and three share a family bathroom, whilst the sumptuous Master Bedroom suite with full en-suite bathroom facilities and a spacious dressing room also off the landing.

The stairs continue to the second floor with bedrooms four and five, each with en-suite facilities separated by a galleried landing which could provide additional interesting storage space.

Mill House is released for sale at £910,000.

Sales and Marketing Manager, Marie McQuaid, commented, "The showhome here opened just over twelve months ago last October and we have

enjoyed incredible interest and visitor figures ever since with most visitors returning several times to talk to our Sales staff and understand the options available on these very high specification homes."

Energy saving has also been a priority at the development with heat recovery systems taking the heat from bathroom and kitchen vented air to heat fresh air entering the homes. Under-floor heating to ground and first floors together with open fireplaces and tripled glazed windows create the best of both worlds – low energy utilisation and also an abundance of light in the homes. The luxury homes also come complete with one year's complimentary membership to both Ramside Hall Hotel's Golf Club and new Spa/Leisure Club.



Full details are available from the on-site Development Sales Manager, Thursday to Monday 10.00am to 5.00pm on 07983 080952 or [www.derestreethomes.co.uk](http://www.derestreethomes.co.uk)



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Photographs show typical Linden homes at Saint George. Interiors may include optional upgrades or extras available at additional cost. \*On selected homes only. Subject to status, terms and conditions apply. Not available in conjunction with any other offer. Price and details correct at time of going to press.





## SPRINGFIELD HOUSE, SPOUTWELL LANE, CORBRIDGE



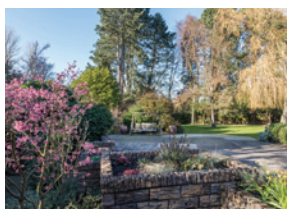
### PRICE ON APPLICATION

Springfield House is believed to have been constructed circa 1874 and is a highly impressive detached Victorian residence with open views over the Tyne Valley. The six bedroom property was extensively refurbished in the 1990s with further refurbishment by the current owners in the last two years as well as the construction of a detached four car garage. The house itself is delightful and provides some of the most impressive family accommodation in the north of England, with period styling and modern luxury fittings. This very special home is set in circa 2.9 acres of beautiful, secluded gardens and grounds with stunning open lawns, south facing terraces, an all-weather tennis court, magnificent rhododendrons, tall evergreen trees and a twin tree house, a highly impressive piece of architecture, built by the same company as The Alnwick Garden tree house.



Contact rare! From Sanderson Young on 0191 2233500 [ashleigh.sundin@sandersonyoung.co.uk](mailto:ashleigh.sundin@sandersonyoung.co.uk) [www.sandersonyoung.co.uk](http://www.sandersonyoung.co.uk)





## Glengairn South Drive, Woolsington

Glengairn is a magnificent detached house, constructed in 1928 and much improved and updated by the current owners. The gardens are a significant feature of this beautiful family home with manicured lawns, large terrace, mature trees, recreation area, hot tub and exterior lighting.

**Price Guide £1.295 Million**

7 6 4 D



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## STANLEY DENTAL 30TH BIRTHDAY PARTY

Stanley Dental, based on Front Street in the heart of Stanley, hosted a party to celebrate 30 years since principal dentist Dr Onkar Dhanoya took over the practice. Members of staff (past and present), colleagues from the dentistry community, patients, family and friends gathered to share memories and enjoy drinks, food and birthday cake. The day also highlighted the rebrand of Stanley Dental - which will now be known as Honour Health, to better reflect the range of dental and skin treatments provided by the team, and to emphasise the strong links between dental health and general health. Stanley Dental's sister practices - Ponteland Dental and Osborne Dental - are also rebranding as Honour Health.







## South Wing Bolton Hall, Bolton Village, Nr Alnwick

4 3 2

A fabulous Grade II Listed country home with great character, in an area of outstanding natural beauty. The magnificent grounds extend to circa 5.2 acres with open lawns, superb borders, private terrace and patio, woodland, walled garden, paddock and outbuildings.



**Price Guide £749,500**

**rare!** From Sanderson Young

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# WHY NOW IS A GOOD TIME TO INVEST IN BUY-TO-LET



The UK is set to experience a shortfall in millions of rental properties, with demand for private rental accommodation being higher than ever. Following months of uncertainty in the market due to cuts to landlord tax relief and a rise in stamp duty, Bradley Hall director Peter Bartley discusses why now is still as good a time as ever to invest in the buy-to-let market.

**The Royal Institution for Chartered Surveyors (RICS) has revealed that there will be a shortfall of 1.8m rental properties unless the government puts incentives into place to halt decreasing numbers of available rented homes.**

Since the changes in stamp duty on buy-to-let properties in April, investment buyers who purchase properties to rent have paid a higher tax on their purchase, which in turn has encouraged less people to invest, with a RICS survey revealing that 86% of landlords had no plans to purchase further properties this year.

The North East has seen a slight decline in buy-to-let purchases, however, that was to be expected due to the 'shock factor' of stamp duty changes and the uncertainty of the market surrounding Brexit. Although this has the potential discourage investors, now really isn't such a bad time to invest. Demand for properties is set to soar, with analysis published last year by accountancy firm PwC indicating that the number of people living in rented accommodation is set to steadily increase from 5.4m in 2015 to 7.2m by 2025, with a quarter in private housing.

The steady increase in demand can be explained in the fact that, despite various incentives, there are still many people who simply can't afford to

purchase their own property due to expensive deposits and house prices.

Good news has also come in the form of competitive buy-to-let mortgage rates from lenders to drive up the amount of purchases in the market. Current restrictions on supply are also currently driving up rental costs, providing a higher rental yield whilst still keeping costs attainable for those who are renting. With low interest rates and high demand, now is a good a time as ever to invest in buy-to-let.

Although we continue to have confidence in the buy-to-let market, now is probably the most important time to have an expert adviser on your side to guide your investment and ensure you get a good return.

In Bradley Hall's 27 years of providing property services we have been very successful in acquiring properties on favourable terms and values on behalf of numerous clients, including pension funds and individuals.

During the acquisitions service, we work closely with clients to define the parameters of their exact requirements whilst sourcing all suitable accommodation, taking into account all factors, including costs, location and the potential calibre of tenant. We undertake inspections and preparing

a detailed report with specific recommendations. Going so far as to project managing the entire process, we oversee viewing arrangements and secure the most advantageous terms, which can result in considerable savings for clients.

Day to day property management, including dealing with tenant issues, maintenance on your property and its contents, and setting service charge budgets are taken care of by your specified Bradley Hall property manager.

The financial side of property management can be daunting to those who aren't industry experts, and it can be easy to miss details when compiling information to complete a VAT return, ensuring all income and expenditure is taken care of and liaising with accountants. Expert financial advice is on hand and all monetary aspects of property management are taken care of.

Bradley Hall can also help to guide buyers through the process of purchasing buy-to-let property through its in house brokerage, BH Financial Services and BH Mortgage Services, offering 1000's of the latest deals. If you are a first time landlord or looking to expand your existing portfolio, BH Financial Services will find you the right financial solution.



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NORTHERN INSIGHT MEETS

## Ashlea Wright - Sales Manager, Barratt Homes

### Did you always envisage a career in property?

No, I started my career in pensions but have always been interested in property and décor.

### What attracted you to your current role?

The chance to grow within the business and to pass on my experiences to those I manage.

### What changes have you seen in the market since you started?

Since I began working for BDW back in 2007 the changes have been vast, the main change being the giant leap into the digital world.

### Brexit uncertainty. What's your slant?

I think Brexit has been a real non-event, people are waiting for things to change but I don't think

anything will change for some time and even then it will be very gradual.

### How would you advise people looking to buy property?

I would advise people to seek financial advice, make a wish list of things you must have and things you'd like, be flexible and look for good testimonials – like 5\* status.

### Tell us the most exciting thing you're currently working on?

Being Sales Manager for the most exciting and exclusive development in the North East, La Sagesse. I've worked closely with the team throughout and to see people now living on the development and only a few homes still for sale is really rewarding.

### What's your fondest memory of a career in the property industry?

One of the funniest was a client who asked me whether the garden was grass or turf...priceless.

### What are your career aspirations?

My aspirations are to enjoy my career, help and work alongside my colleagues and to try to make a difference to the growth of BDW.

### Where's the best place to live in the North East, and why?

The best place to live is wherever makes you happy.

### When not working, how do you like to relax?

I like to relax at home with my family and friends and like to travel as much as I can.



# La Sagesse

JESMOND, NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE

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Once the home of a renowned private school, the site of La Sagesse is currently one of the most sought-after housing developments in the North East. It offers a truly unique collection of 48 bespoke homes in Jesmond, and with nearly 90% of the homes now sold, don't miss out on your chance to live in such an iconic location. The spectacular seven bedroom Carham home is ready to move into now - so why not book an appointment today to visit La Sagesse?

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# PINK BATHROOM SUITES AND BROWN FORMICA DOORS

A REMINDER OF HOW FAR INTERIOR DESIGN HAS COME SINCE THE 60's



After 1



Before 1

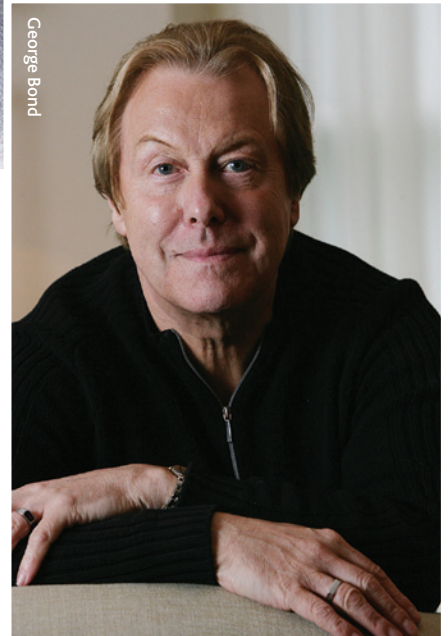


After 2



Before 2

George Bond



## George Bond Interior Design gut and re-design a dark and dingy 60's apartment.

Here at George Bond interior Design, we work on a variety of projects that come in all shapes and sizes. One project which was very interesting to work on was a 1960s apartment in Gosforth which hadn't been touched since being built. Some of the fixtures and fittings like the pink bathroom suite on pale blue wall tiles and pokey little kitchen with its brown Formica doors, epitomised 60s design and was a reminder of how far we have come.

Contacted soon after the purchase of the property, our brief was to completely gut the apartment, bring it up to date and create a modern, tasteful interior. Our first priority was to look at what areas we could open up in an attempt to make the apartment feel more spacious. The most obvious was to open up the slim galley kitchen and create an open plan lounge, dining and kitchen area. Our next priority was redesigning the lighting layout. When first viewing the property it was obvious to see that the apartment was dark, dingy and not

very inviting, even with its full height windows, and was something which needed to be addressed. Fortunately the ceiling cavity was high enough to install spot lights and due to the wiring throughout the apartment needing replacing we were able to run 5amp circuits allowing low level lighting to work its magic.

To create the modern, tasteful interior we decided to work from a pallet of whites and greys with injections of vibrant orange. Texture and pattern were introduced to give the interior interest and a bit of sophistication. The bathroom was tiled throughout using stunning grey, slate textured tiles, the white sanitary ware acting as a contrast.

Overall the apartment underwent re-wiring, new boiler installed, new heating system installed, new kitchen, new furniture, new bathroom and decoration. This was a most enjoyable and successful project, and is something we would love to work on again.

Ray Watkin







# WEEK 2 WEEK

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The apartments are suitable for any type of traveler needing the comforts of home. We specialise in relocation as well as working with contractors, project workers, legal representatives, loss adjusters, Human Resources, Personal Assistants, Virtual Assistants and more. We provide accommodation for short or long stays with a requirement for apartments or houses on a temporary or longer-term basis.

Clients can enjoy our apartments from as little as 2 nights, and stay as long as they like. Being a smaller firm we are flexible always endeavouring to make the booking process as simple as possible. If you're responsible for making group bookings pass the task onto us, consider it done! We offer help to choose the right apartment based on your specific requirements in your preferred location.

We provide a warm and friendly welcome for our clients upon arrival which is either a personal meet and greet from the Week2Week team or if you are arriving outside office hours a key courier will meet you outside your chosen apartment.

Our teams are guided by values of respect, integrity, team work and empowerment; we employ the highest ethical and quality standards, treating everyone with fairness and dignity. This feeds directly into our service standard to complete our annual quality audit resulting in achieving the Quality Marque set by the Association of Service Apartment Providers. This audit each year provides us with an equivalent of hotels' star grading, we achieved a 4\* equivalent in 2016.

Week2Week Serviced Apartments work with North East and UK alliances to deliver exceptional customer service. Our product is second to none with our company Director recently being shortlisted for The Sunshine Fund's the Glass Slipper Awards, for, 'Best Newcomer'. This is testimony of the great results and quality product provided by the team.



*You travel.  
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You stay.*

## DON'T MISS YOUR CHANCE TO BUY AT STUNNING LA SAGESSE DEVELOPMENT

David Wilson Homes North East, is celebrating the success of its beautiful La Sagesse development in Jesmond with 41 of the 48 homes now sold. The five star housebuilder is encouraging buyers to act fast for their chance to buy at the totally unique development, with just seven homes now remaining.

Homes available to buy include luxury two bedroom apartments in the charming Iona House, which effortlessly combines modern design with the traditional elements of the original school building that it was converted from, such as the feature portico entrance. The unique, renovated apartments offer a true sense of space, with large feature windows and high ceilings. Buyers at Iona House will also be able to enjoy stunning views out onto Jesmond Dene and its vast surroundings. The apartments in Iona House are available from £395,000.

Also available at La Sagesse is the Carham, a breath taking seven-bedroom home that epitomises luxury living. The Carham has high specification features throughout, such as glass and stainless steel balustrading, under floor heating, a German-made kitchen and completely bespoke bathrooms. The ground floor of this impressive property is filled with natural light and offers a wealth of elegant living spaces. The stunning master-suite is located on the first floor along with five of the bedrooms, plus an additional bedroom on the second floor. The Carham is available to buy from £1,350,000.

Ashlea Wright, Sales Manager at La Sagesse, commented: "La Sagesse is a truly special and unique development and buyers in Jesmond are unlikely to have the opportunity to buy at somewhere like this once all of the homes are sold. The old school building has been converted into beautiful, spacious apartments with stunning views of Jesmond Dene so we expect them to be hugely popular with buyers. Plot 9 is also now available to purchase, which is our last remaining lodge, offering luxurious two-bedroom detached accommodation so we expect it to sell fast.



"Since launching the site we've seen continuous high demand and it's easy to see why. Given that we've now just seven homes remaining, I really would encourage those that are interested in buying at La Sagesse to visit the development to get a true sense of its beauty and speak to one of our expert sales advisers."

La Sagesse on Towers Avenue in Jesmond showcases a harmonious balance between the redeveloped 19th century former school buildings built in the gothic revival style, and a series of new-build properties including detached homes, town houses and apartments. Jesmond offers buyers a wealth of amenities on their doorstep with good access to Newcastle's city centre and Quayside business hubs, as well as good links to the A1, regional and national rail networks plus domestic and international air routes at nearby Newcastle International Airport.

To find out more about La Sagesse or to book an appointment, please visit: [www.dwh.co.uk/lasagesse](http://www.dwh.co.uk/lasagesse)

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## NORTH EAST PR CONSULTANT ELECTED TO HIGHEST OFFICE

North East PR Consultant Sarah Hall has been elected 2017 President-Elect of the Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR). The role involves a three-year tenure, during which Sarah will become the Institute's President in 2018.

The CIPR has the power to grant Chartered Public Relations Practitioner status to individuals who meet the required standard of professional distinction. Sarah was the first practitioner in the region to achieve this.

The president's duties include acting as chairperson for the CIPR and as the representative of the public relations industry within the UK. Sarah will continue throughout as Managing Director of Sarah Hall Consulting Ltd.

Sarah's success in the CIPR elections follows closely behind the publication of her second book, #FuturePROof: Edition Two, aimed at demonstrating the value of public relations as a strategic management discipline.

Sarah said: "To have been elected as 2018 President of the CIPR is a real privilege, especially as my time at the helm will mark seventy years for the Institute. There is a lot to celebrate however, I have pledged to address the gender pay gap in public relations, to build the industry's reputation and widen the membership offer."

## MHW APPOINTED TO MANAGE PR FOR OFFSHORE WIND FARM

Leading North East PR consultancy MHW has been appointed to provide PR and stakeholder engagement support to EDF Energy Renewables on the development of a new offshore wind farm off the coast of Blyth, Northumberland.

The appointment follows MHW's role in providing communications support for the company's Teesside offshore wind farm at Redcar and previous involvement in various onshore wind farm developments around England.

Construction work on a new electricity substation on the site of the former Blyth power station has started and gravity base foundations are being built on the River Tyne in Wallsend.

Offshore work will start in 2017 to install five turbines of 41.5MW total capacity, some 5.7km off the coast. The turbines will provide enough low carbon electricity to power 33,000 homes.

Newcastle-based PR consultancy MHW will be assisting the EDF ER communications and project teams with media liaison, local community engagement and stakeholder support.

MHW was established by experienced PR directors Wayne Halton and Ian Watson in 2000 and provides consultancy services to a wide range of business and hospitality clients around the region.



## SHOWCASE DIGITAL CONFERENCE IN TEESSIDE



Digital experts from across the country will come together to discuss what a digital future looks like for businesses.

The Chartered Institute of Public Relations, Teesside University and Google Digital Garage are bringing the digital conference to Teesside University on the 10th November, from 8.30am until 4pm.

It will include a guest panel comprising digital expert and author Andrew Bruce Smith, Hayden Bailey from Orca mobile, Rob Earnshaw from Teesside University's DigitalCity, Steve Cochrane of Psyche and Kirsty Styles from Tech North.

Aimed at large to small businesses, communication professionals, academics and anyone with an

interest in improving their digital understanding, delegates will hear experts discuss latest innovations in digital communications and business commerce from the Teesside business community.

Google has cited research showing that more than 90% of jobs will require digital literacy in the near future and that small companies can grow twice as fast when they have a strong web presence.

Chair of the Chartered Institute of Public Relations, Sally Pearson, commented: "This will be an exceptionally valuable event in as we will be able to offer businesses access to some of the most successful digital companies both in the area and nationally."

## INSIGHT MEETS INSPIRATION

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# “WE DON’T REALLY GET MANY PROJECTS REQUIRING A MARKETING OR ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY”



This comment was made in the same week that I took a call from a company enquiring if “engaging with six, perhaps eight houses” was too small for us to accept as a job. It was also three days before another person volunteered his view of the importance of tapping into a community to understand its specific quirks and the challenges they may present to anyone seeking to bring forward a site for development or a planning proposal.

**Stakeholder engagement; it’s an interesting conundrum, and one which is usually ‘tacked-on’ to a project, rather than being placed at its heart, and regarded as integral to its successful delivery as the design and engineering solutions proposed.**

At the heart of marketing is engagement, and, I would argue, education. How can anyone make a decision about whether they want – or need – what is proposed through a project development unless they are informed about what it really involves and will deliver, as opposed to what the inevitable Chinese whispers would have us believe? I’ve lost count of the number of time I’ve been told a development comprising ‘up to’ a set number of units will “end up with twice as many” and that “what’s shown here will look nothing like when it’s built”. This is when Share of Voice (SOV) comes into play.

Share of voice is how ‘loud’ an organisation’s marketing communications are in the market place. There are many other ‘voices’ competing to be heard, and it’s easy for your message to be drowned out by the cacophony of noise seeking to snare the market’s attention. The growth of social media hasn’t made the challenge any easier, and

when you factor in how quickly a campaign can not only be started but gather momentum, it’s fundamental to ensure you have a strategy in place ahead of time.

Key to an effective strategy – for both engagement and marketing purposes – is ensuring clarity of message, and identifying which message is appropriate for your audience. This will change from project to project, and as the business grows, or as the business plan is updated. It doesn’t matter what your message is, as long as it is consistent, coherent and communicated in a way that is clear and strategic.

Developing strategies for clients is just one element of what we do at Results Communications, but this single element forms the foundations upon which a development project, a client’s reputation, or their business growth will sit.

It’s not just for projects that engagement is important. Any individual, company or organisation seeking to present itself, its products or services to a market ought to be engaging with their audiences to ensure they not only understand what their priorities and concerns are, but also position their offer as a solution. This is true for companies offering both products and/or services.

As a marketing consultancy specialising in the construction, built environment and infrastructure sectors, I see first-hand the benefits of stakeholder engagement when it’s done as more than a ‘box-ticking’ exercise. As a marketer, a communicator, facilitator and as a businessperson, I encourage and advise clients to proactively engage with their stakeholders – their staff, their customers, their clients, their board and anyone else who is likely to be impacted by their business activities. It’s a great opportunity to not only reach out to Business to Business (B2B) and Business to Consumer (B2C) audiences, and tailor your messages accordingly, but also to learn something new.

So what are the benefits of stakeholder engagement and marketing engagement? This is something I get asked all the time, and there’s a seemingly never-ending list. If pressed, though, my top three (today) would be better decision-making, adding value and breaking down barriers.

*Do you have a marketing or engagement challenge? Do you have questions about the best approach to tackle it, and how not to? We’re happy to help define approaches and strategies so why not give us a call or drop us an email?*



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## TWENTY WORDS. ONE TEXT: THE BEST STORY EVER TOLD

Given blood recently? I've started getting back into the habit having had far too long a hiatus.

I'm not here to preach about the benefits of doing so (but you should), moreover I want to tell you about my most recent experience and why I think the NHS Blood and Transplant Service places great communications at the centre of everything they do.

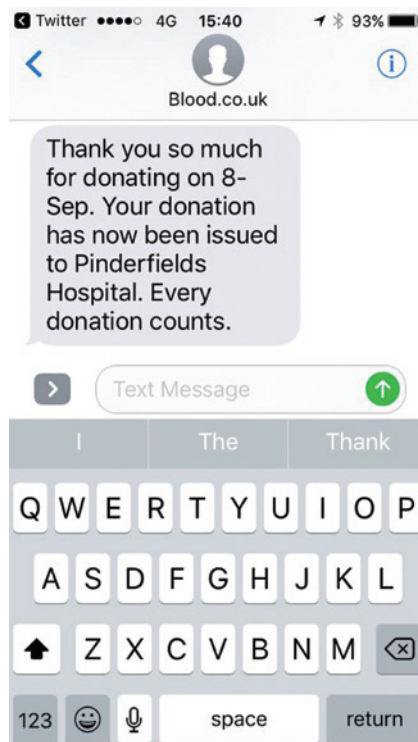
If you're anything like me, you go through the process uncomfortably (mostly because I still can't look at the needle going in my arm), enjoy your tea n biscuits (yes, they still do that) and remember not to do anything too strenuous for the next 24 hours.

But two weeks after my last donation, I got a text from them: "Thank you so much for donating on 8-Sep. Your donation has now been issued to Pinderfields Hospital. Every donation counts."

Wow!

It stopped me in my tracks. Suddenly, my decision to donate becomes something very real. They're tracking the progress of my blood and I now know that it's about to go into action at a hospital in Wakefield. Mind blowing.

I start running away with my thoughts and I'm creating stories in my own head. Maybe it's being used at a birth, or maybe in the emergency room. Perhaps it's lying in wait for an amazing operation to give someone the chance of new life.



Why am I telling you this? Let me put my work hat on and tell you that it's probably the most brilliant piece of communication I've been on the receiving end of. One text, twenty words. That's all. And in an instant I am completely and totally engaged in this process.

At Glue, we're firm believers in the power of great stories and their ability to inspire people to take action. This 20-word story did all of that for me.

I shared my text on my twitter feed and my Facebook page. Now I'm an 'influencer' for blood donation. I'm amplifying their message. Donating again can't come soon enough. Where will my next donation end up? Will all my blood find its way to West Yorkshire or is my B negative destined for other parts of the UK?

I'm desperate to know the next chapter and there's only one way to do that – give more blood. Now I'm a loyal customer. It's outstanding and effective communications that solves the very issues the NHS Blood and Transplant service is trying to tackle.

The lesson? It proves that smart, yet simple communication at the centre of your business can generate willing loyalty, develop customer engagement and inspire your customers to act as positive ambassadors of your message. Wouldn't we all love that?



# GET MORE FROM YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

International research and training group Econsultancy focuses on helping organisations do more digital business. Earlier this year it published a Social Media Platforms Overview authored by Michelle Goodall (@GreenWellys) full of the latest data insights and trends.

Here Sarah Hall, Managing Director of Sarah Hall Consulting, looks at the top ten highlights to help you generate the greatest value from social media.



Sarah Hall

## 1 - General consumer behaviours

There are 23 billion active social media accounts globally across more than 20 well-established social networks – up 10% from 2015. Social media reaches an average of 31% of the global population according to We Are Social.

Across all age groups and all countries, the primary reason for participating in social networking is to stay in touch with friends. Brands should keep this front of mind when campaign planning.

## 2 - Fastest growing platforms

Instagram, Pinterest and Tumblr are the fastest growing social networks and have the youngest active age groups.

## 3 - Purchasing

Some social platforms are significantly closer to the end of the purchase funnel. 87% of Pinterest users have used the platform to help them research a purchase.

## 4 - Facebook

84% of all global internet users (excluding China) have an account on at least one Facebook service (Facebook, Facebook Messenger, Instagram or WhatsApp).

The regular top brand interactions on Facebook include unliking a product or brand; posting a comment or question on a company, brand or product's Facebook page; asking a question about a product you're interested in buying; and posting a

negative comment about a product or brand.

## 5 - Twitter

The top behaviour of Twitter users is reading news stories. According to Nick Pickles at the May Global Diplomacy Event, tweets with media get between 15 to 27% more engagement than text tweets. Tweets with video get 6x more retweets than photo tweets.

## 6 - LinkedIn

LinkedIn is the world's largest professional network on the internet with more than 433 million members in over 200 countries and territories. Professionals are signing up to join LinkedIn at a rate of more than two new members per second. Students and college graduates are LinkedIn's fastest growing demographic.

## 7 - Instagram

A fifth (20%) of all global internet users aged 16-64 have an Instagram account and 76% of active users are aged 16-34.

## 8 - Pinterest

Pinterest has 176 million registered users. Sixty percent are outside the US, with UK, Japan, France, Germany and Brazil its fastest growing markets.

Over half of US women between the ages of 18-54 have signed up for Pinterest.

## 9 - Snapchat

Wondering if Snapchat is right for your brand?

With over 100 million active users it's known for being the teenagers platform of choice, but over half of new daily users today are 25+.

Snapchat provides marketers and communicators with the ability to create stories that have a short shelf life, using video, photography, text and filters. Arguably the two most appealing features are Discover and Lenses. Discover is a section of the app that enables brands to publish articles, videos and images and to monetise their content, while Lenses allow brands to create animations that transform or are overlaid on top of your selfie.

## 10 - Key trends

Live video, immersive video formats (360, virtual reality) and messaging will all continue to become increasingly popular with brands as the market matures, technology evolves and costs decrease.

Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Pinterest are all moving to introduce social commerce features.

Social advertising formats are being developed to suit both consumer behaviours and advertisers' needs.

## Finally, think value exchange

Econsultancy's Social Media Platforms Overview author Michelle Goodall challenges brands to consider the fundamental value exchange between the organisation and its audiences on social media.

The content/services used to attract their attention should create mutual value and deliver a business building outcome.

For more information on Econsultancy, visit [www.econsultancy.com](http://www.econsultancy.com)

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## MEDIAWORKS GO MEXICAN FOR GOLF DAY

On the 20th of October, Mediaworks hosted their annual golf day at Close House. This year the theme was 'Mexican Shambles' a live Mariachi band welcomed guests and sombreros were handed out before the teams played a shotgun start.

Over £700 was raised on the day, which was donated to the Newcastle United Foundation who make a real difference to the lives of disadvantaged children, young people and families in our region.







## MEDIAWORKS BEAT MINECRAFT WITH ST OSWALD'S SNOWDOGS APP

The largest free public art trail ever to take place in the North East has got off to a paw-fect start, as visitor figures smash expectations.

Since the Great North Snowdogs trail went live, on 19 September, the 61 large and 97 small, individually-decorated sculptures have been viewed by tens of thousands of people across the region.

And more than 5,500 have downloaded the special, interactive trail app – raising over £2,700 for the event's organiser, Newcastle-based St Oswald's Hospice and putting Great North Snowdogs ahead of cult video game Minecraft in Apple's top three downloads on only the app's third day of release.

The 79p app, designed by North East digital agency Mediaworks, enables users to navigate the trail with an at-a-glance guide to each dog's location.

And, when they unlock the four figure codes shown at the base of each large Snowdog, they access a wide range of discounts and offers provided by sponsors and supporters of the project.

The majority of the Snowdogs, designed by artists and celebrities can be found along the route of the Tyne and Wear Metro – with one 'stray' dog, sited at Leaplish, near Kielder.

"The app allows us to track a number of statistics including our su-pawtters most favourite pooch and the first person to complete the entire trail using the app," said Kathy Stewart, Digital Communications and Marketing Officer.

"We're incredibly grateful to everyone who's downloaded the app so far and who's voicing their support for the project on social media – it's great to know that people across the North East and further afield are supporting our services."

Brett Jacobson, Managing Director of Mediaworks, said: "We're incredibly proud to be working with St Oswald's Hospice, an organisation that does so much outstanding work across our region.

"We're delighted to collaborate on a number of projects to help grow St Oswald's digital presence and raise awareness of the charity, their work and their objectives. We look forward to continuing our partnership in the future."

If you're a business who needs a bespoke app developed to help you reach new audiences, get in touch to see how Mediaworks can help you create a class-leading multi-platform application. [www.mediaworks.co.uk](http://www.mediaworks.co.uk) 0191 4040100 [info@mediaworks.co.uk](mailto:info@mediaworks.co.uk)

## ASK SILVER BULLET



“As a retailer, Christmas is our busiest season and we’re worried about negative online reviews and feedback decimating our trade - what can we do to ensure a positive reputation?”

The easy answer is, of course, make sure your products and your service are faultless ensuring there’s nothing for people to complain about, but as we live in the real world where mistakes happen and, as the strain of increased Christmas trading begins to take its toll, the mistakes may well occur more frequently at Christmas than normal.

So accepting the fact that, with the best will in the world, there’s going to be an unhappy customer somewhere whose transaction has not gone smoothly and is going to share that experience in this new digital world to do his or her best to ruin your Christmas, is probably a good place to start!

Some 90% of people state they now check online reviews before making a purchase across a variety of sectors with this figure rising even higher for restaurants. Perhaps more surprising is that over half of the younger 18-34 respondents stated that they trusted online reviews more than the opinions of friends and family. In terms of reasons behind negative reviews, poor customer service was the most common reason followed by damaged goods and late deliveries.

But, there is good news too in that a bad review is NOT the end of the world, indeed many people do not trust posted reviews if there isn’t at least one negative review, fearing they are all fake. The

important point is the only effective way to combat a negative review is to respond to it, preferably the sooner the better. A fast response can not only pacify a dissatisfied or even angry customer but can also turn him/her from a foe into a friend – what’s more, if you can respond creatively, the response can be shared by your whole online community. In the same survey, 84% of respondents said they would return to the retailer if they addressed the problem.

You can also learn from the review and be seen to making changes as a result – again, you’re not only turning a foe into a friend but you’re publicly showing your ability to react to genuine criticism. Respect the criticism and never try to cover it up – the horror stories of organisations’ attempts to get negative reviews removed which then come into the public domain thereby exacerbating the problem and negative publicity are lessons to be learnt.

I think companies can do a lot worse than learn from a global brand – in this case the famous Walt Disney Corporation, a business that hosts 135 million people in their parks annually, more than a few of which will inevitably be disappointed by their experience and angry. The Disney technique is HEARD – Hear (let the customer complain and get it off their chest), Empathise (you understand their frustration), Apologise (whether they’re right

or wrong...), Resolve (what can we do for you to make this right) and finally, Diagnose (why did this happen and what do need to do to make sure it doesn’t happen again). You may not be a big fan of the Corporation or their employment policies or maybe even their products, but you can’t argue they know what they’re doing.

You have the perfect opportunity to now begin a dialogue with your customers and turn them into brand ambassadors so that instead of removing the negative review, you drown it in positive feedback about how good your customer response has been – every positive comment reduces the impact of a negative one. If you can also do this creatively, with a sense of humour, so much the better as you show your company to be made up of people just like your customers who do their best in strained circumstances.

Finally, never take the criticism personally and become defensive, listing all the reasons why the customer, on this occasion was wrong – you’re never going to convince him or her or the other viewers of the review – you may think they may have been the most stupid, obnoxious customers your staff have ever had the misfortune to deal with, but apologise all the same and you’ll win customers back every time – whether you may want them is entirely another question – Happy Christmas!

Do you need to 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](mailto:hello@silverbulletmarketing.co.uk) or Tweet us (not so anonymously) @SilverBulletPR and use the hash tag #AskSB



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## PRIMULA'S CHEESY BALL RAISES THOUSANDS FOR DEMENTIA CHARITY

Cheese maker Primula has raised more than £15,000 for the Alzheimer's Society after hosting its first ever charity Cheesy Ball.

The event, which took place at the Newcastle Gateshead Marriott Hotel MetroCentre was held in memory of former Primula Warehouse Manager Dean Elliott, who was a big supporter of the Alzheimer's Society and sadly passed away last year.

The money raised is in addition to the thousands of pounds given to charities every year through sales of Primula Cheese, with profits donated to good causes across the UK and the world through the Kavli Trust – a charitable Trust which owns the Kavli Group of which Primula is part.

The Oh So Cheesy Ball, which was hosted by Heart North East presenter Tom Campbell, featured an auction and tombola as well as a three course menu created exclusively for the occasion by Marriott Executive Head Chef Chris Wells and Primula's Product Innovation Manager Peggy van Rooyen and featuring Primula cheese in every dish.



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## GATESHEAD'S SYNERGI IS A GEM

Going the extra mile for customers continues to pay dividends for North East IT company Synergi after it scooped a finalists' accolade at the recent Northumbrian Water GEM Awards.

The Gateshead firm picked-up the 'Greatest Contribution to Our Innovation Culture' award after seeing its expertise in delivering ground-breaking IT solutions recognised by the regional water supplier in the face of fierce competition.

Synergi is currently engaged in the roll-out of Nintex workflow automation software to over 2900 employees as part of a strategic investment programme to embed Microsoft technologies into Northumbrian Water. This includes the delivery of the Innovation Management Portal, health and safety apps and facilities management apps.

Synergi was praised for bringing a fresh perspective to work that's enabling the water supplier to



quickly develop dynamic applications, which offer interactive multi-device user experiences.

The company was selected from dozens of other providers for the fifth annual 'Going the Extra Mile' (GEM) Awards, which mark the achievements of Northumbrian Water's supply chain partners over the last 12 months.

Peter Joyson, Managing Director of Synergi,

received the award along with fellow Director Justin Short from the water supplier's CEO Heidi Mottram at a ceremony at Beamish Hall.

Peter said: "It's fantastic for the business and for the whole team to be recognised in this way. Our hard work, dedication, agility and innovation has been rewarded as we embark on a long and successful relationship with Northumbrian Water."

## REGIONAL IT SERVICE PROVIDER CELEBRATES 25 YEARS OF SUCCESS



A leading North East IT solutions company is celebrating its 25th anniversary. Since the organisation's humble beginnings, Perfect Image has grown into a major full service IT provider, working with hundreds of businesses across the UK.

Perfect Image was founded in 1991 by Andrew Robson, CEO. Andrew set up the business after graduating from the University of Cambridge with an MA in Computer Science. His first employee joined the business a year later and the company

has continued to go from strength-to-strength, now employing over 100 members of staff.

From its base in Cobalt Business Park, Perfect Image works with a range of customers including The North East Chamber of Commerce (NECC), Bellway and Barbour. It delivers high quality, end-to-end IT services to a wide range of companies.

The company recently held a special race day event for over 150 guests at Newcastle Racecourse in celebration of its anniversary year.

## HIPPO MARKETING WINS CREATIVE HACKATHON

From 1-2 October, a 'Hackathon' took place sponsored by Northumbrian Water, Sunderland City Council and Digital Catapult, an event which allowed a large number of computer programmers to engage in collaborative problem solving.

In April next year, the water system will be de-regularised across the North-East, with both individuals and companies able to pick and choose from suppliers UK-wide.

The hackathon was held to understand how Sunderland City Council and Northumbrian Water could make efficiency savings across their network, enabling them to provide the best possible service at the lowest possible cost to customers when this new deregulation happens.

Hippo Marketing, led by their Data Scientist David Jamieson, won the 'Creative Challenge' to deliver insightful business intelligence that could be acted upon by the sponsors to prevent leaks.



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## SO CAN TECH PROFESSIONALS EVER HAVE IT ALL IN THE NORTH EAST – A GREAT PLACE TO LIVE AND WORK?

Whilst the north east undeniably boasts some of the UK's most spectacular scenery and surf beaches and vibrant cities, can it ever compete with other regions as a place to pursue a rewarding career for technology professionals?

Nick Graham, CTO at Kykloud, one of the region's most successful Software as a Service (SaaS) businesses, developing property asset management software which is used around the globe, believes it can. He urges ambitious software professionals to look at some of the amazing technology being developed here in the north east before being lured elsewhere in the country.

"There was definitely a time when technology professionals choosing to stay or live in the north east were making somewhat of a compromise between career and lifestyle. Yes living in many parts of the north east offered access to cheaper housing, beautiful beaches, vibrant nightlife, good schools and the rest but still the vast majority of ambitious professionals were lured away from the region for the high figure salaries and exciting projects on offer elsewhere.

But things are changing, in fact things have changed; it is absolutely no longer necessary to move away to pursue a financially rewarding and fulfilling career. Thanks to a very buoyant tech scene and ongoing investment, the region now offers technology opportunities in abundance and because supply has not yet caught up with demand it's most certainly an employees' market.

Since we launched, Kykloud has doubled in size year on year and given some of our recent high profile customer account wins we have significantly

increased the size of our development team and are actively looking for a further ten software developers who can help us to continue to grow.

We are offering the right people the opportunity to come and join a hugely successful business whose market leading technology has been adopted by organisations such as the Department of Education, Boots, Aecom and Carillion to manage some of the world's most iconic and valuable real estate. Kykloud really is at the forefront of the PropTech scene, helping to change the way in which an entire industry behaves – not bad for technology developed right here in an office in the North East?

And we are not alone; there is some amazing, disruptive technology being built here in the north

east which is commanding a global audience. Ambitious and successful tech businesses such as SaleCycle, Atom Bank and ZeroLight are really helping to put the region on the digital map and providing real opportunities for developers who share their vision.

I know from experience that joining a growing tech firm with trajectory growth like ours can provide an amazing opportunity for ambitious software professionals. I certainly wish that I had started out in my technology career in this current market!

So yes, talented technology professionals can definitely have their cake and eat it here in the north east, it is one place where it is possible to have it all.



Anyone interested in finding out more about the opportunities available at Kykloud should contact [careers@kykloud.com](mailto:careers@kykloud.com)



# TIME FOR A SMARTER APPROACH TO NETWORK MANAGEMENT



Imagine how annoyed you would be if your house roof had been suffering a minor but undetected leak for months, and you only found out about it when your bedroom ceiling caved in. An odd analogy but it perfectly illustrates the point that a small problem not detected early can cause a large issue.

Computer network management is a little bit like property maintenance. You need to constantly monitor for potential issues so you can deal with them before they become real problems that cost you money.

Until now, outsourcing network management has been an expensive business, and ironically out of the reach of the smaller companies who need it most, but today's sophisticated management tools are transforming network management from a chore into a highly cost effective business advantage.

*“A healthy, smooth-running IT network means you benefit from fewer disruptions, increased productivity and reduced security risks.”*

In our role as the North East's leading ICT and data centre services expert, we use best of breed tools to monitor and manage every component of hundreds of our clients' networks, from hardware and software to switches and firewalls, round the

clock for every day of the year. As well as constantly scouring for potential problems and failures and operating as an IT asset management function, these smart systems can identify issues such as a server that is coming up to full capacity, or a patch update that is needed, working right down to a micro-level where you are notified in advance when your printer is due to run out of toner.

Clients who opt to outsource their network management to us report that the main advantage lies in taking away the worry of coming into the office in the morning to find their systems are down, or not working correctly. As well as removing everyday support headaches it provides them with real time detailed information on the health of their network, such as support call patterns and network performance and behaviour, which in turn feeds back into their IT strategy and helps them to reduce costs and increase efficiency.

Network management support contracts can be incredibly flexible. For instance at a gold level you could expect your IT partner to proactively manage your network, receiving notifications from the managed service portal, fixing faults, addressing issues and reporting progress back to you before you are even aware of them. At silver level, you could opt for your IT partner to receive all portal

notifications and to create, manage and monitor support tickets while you take responsibility for fixing problems; and at bronze level your IT partner should be able to give you direct access to the managed service portal, giving you the tools to directly administer and operate your network.

At all levels of service you should be able to expect daily, weekly, monthly and annual reports so you can see at a glance what is going on.

Network management contracts are becoming an increasingly popular choice for all types and sizes of organisation, and we manage networks that are on the client's own site or housed in our North East data centres, and we work equally successfully alongside companies who have their own IT team and those without any in-house IT resource.

When you have invested thousands of pounds in your network you need it working at optimum levels, but if you are not careful you could find that the amount of time you invest in managing your network is disproportionate to the value that time returns.

If all that has convinced you it's time to take a smarter look at network management, talk to our experts to see how we can help.

*George Galloway, Commercial Director, ITPS*

For more information call 0191 442 8300, email [contact@itps.co.uk](mailto:contact@itps.co.uk) or visit [www.itps.co.uk](http://www.itps.co.uk)



Synergi directors Justin Short (left) with Peter Joynson

## NEW BUSINESS ACCOUNTING SOFTWARE SET TO SHAKE UP FINANCE AND SALES

A leading North East technology company is spearheading moves to change the way businesses manage their accounts, sales and customer relationships.

Synergi IT, a leading Microsoft partner in the region, is driving the marketing of a major new software product called Dynamics 365, that only became available from the start of November.

This is an innovative cloud-based product from Microsoft that goes head-to-head with Salesforce, Oracle and SAP. And for many North East businesses that are operating accounts systems on Pegasus or Sage software, this will be a disruptive force and serious alternative.

Dynamics 365 is cloud software that's combined what is known as CRM, or customer relationship management software, with ERP or enterprise resource management software. It brings together the best of existing CRM and ERP cloud offerings into one cloud service with specific apps for each key business process – such as finance, sales, customer service, etc.

The new software is more flexible, cost-effective and integrates many services already used by Microsoft users.

Justin Short, director at Gateshead-based Synergi IT, said: "Dynamics 365 promises to be a real game-changer in the market. Microsoft's new subscription plans for Dynamics 365 bundle together many popular options, rather than making a company pay for each one per user, separately.

"Businesses can start with what they need and what will immediately be of benefit. But the new software allows them to improve business productivity through a structured workflow of business applications and processes.

"With Dynamics 365 businesses can access greater business intelligence and analytics that allow managers and directors to make better informed decisions. An organisation can start small but quickly reimagine their business model with a consistent, flexible and extendable platform."

For Justin Short and fellow director Peter Joynson, this new development is almost a full circle in terms of their own skill sets and background. Justin is a proven national expert in workflow and business information systems while Peter previously ran a family business that specialised in accountancy software, providing packages like Pegasus and Sage.

Peter Joynson added: "Businesses are already steadily moving into the cloud. Dynamics 365 will simply accelerate this transition. Many companies in the North East have hybrid IT systems with ERP still sat on servers.

"The flexibility and integration offered by Dynamics 365 will make it much easier for companies to make the complete switch and have better business intelligence at their fingertips."

As somebody who understands the accountancy software market, Peter is convinced there are thousands of UK companies who are sitting on legacy finance systems that will readily move into the cloud and a better, more secure software.

There are two editions of Dynamics 365, aimed at the different ends of the business market.

The Business Edition is aimed at small and medium size businesses, with less than 250 employees. This will offer a comprehensive accounting and business management solution for SMEs. This is currently only on preview in the US and Canada and won't be released in the UK until the spring.

Available now is the Dynamics 365 Enterprise Edition, which is targeted at businesses and organisations above the 250 employee threshold. This Enterprise Edition supports cloud or on-premise delivery. This features various new tools including a new workflow management tool that can automate various processes.

Importantly for businesses, this new software has been designed to be hugely price competitive, with some within Microsoft claiming it could save four to five times the cost of traditional CRM providers.

For more information, please visit [synergi.it](http://synergi.it) or call 0191 477 0365





## THE ASSEMBLY ROOMS CELEBRATE 240TH BIRTHDAY

Recently Newcastle's iconic Assembly Rooms welcomed guests to celebrate its 240th year. The grand celebration of the venue's impressive history saw guests treated to a

Champagne reception with canapes circulating, created using the best locally sourced produce. Guests also had the chance to try some of Bonbar's most popular cocktails – the bar, restaurant and lounge which sits within the venue.

Live music was performed by local singer Beth Macari, and magicians entertained guests throughout the evening. A special memory wall was also displayed for guests to browse, showcasing images, memorabilia, short stories and quotes from over the last 240 years, with additions from members of the public.

The venue's Owner and Managing Director Antony Michaelides welcomed guests with a speech, talking about its history and plans for the future, before sharing the stage with The Lord Mayor of Newcastle who also said a few words.







## PARTNERSHIP SEES NEWCASTLE PREP SCHOOL SET NEW STANDARDS

Jesmond-based Newcastle Preparatory School is blazing a trail and setting new standards in schools IT management thanks to a partnership with ICT experts ITPS, which has seen the school move its entire infrastructure to a cloud-based model that delivers better value for money and more structured management and monitoring.

The 130-year old school is the only independent prep school in the Tyneside area to specialise in the education of children from three to 11 years of age. A thoroughly modern school with a great history, NPS prides itself on providing a warm, caring environment in which children experience success, both academic and extra-curricular, whilst growing in confidence and self-esteem. The school is inspected by the Independent Schools Inspectorate, which judges it to be excellent in every aspect of school life.

With access to the latest technology now forming a cornerstone of school life, when Bursar Susan Easton and her team decided on an IT infrastructure refresh, ITPS was invited in for discussions.

ITPS account director David Bradbury takes up the story: "The NPS team knew they needed to upgrade their IT, and were looking for some expert help to establish the right route to take.

"Our work with a large client base of schools and colleges has given us an insight into the issues they face in maintaining an efficient and cost effective IT infrastructure. Schools want to know what other schools are doing in terms of best practice, and what's possible, and that's where we add value.

"NPS's previous infrastructure consisted of a bank of onsite servers, and we were able to demonstrate that rather than simply replacing like with like, a better

solution would be to wipe out all the cost and effort involved in maintaining that, switch to virtual servers and house the IT infrastructure in a secure, private cloud, hosted in our state of the art data centre instead.

"From the client's point of view one of the big advantages of this model is that we continually and heavily invest in the best, most up to date and secure technology, so they don't need to.

"Many schools are making large capital expenditure decisions based on outdated IT models, but NPS is a perfect example of how to embrace new technology and get much better value from the IT budget. If they had simply replaced like with like, it would have cost many tens of thousands to achieve the same level of IT resilience, speed and security as they currently enjoy."

After going out to tender and holding discussions with several IT providers, the NPS team visited ITPS's £4m data centre in Chester le Street, spoke to several of its schools clients, liked what they heard, and awarded the contract to ITPS.

The project team developed a plan that saw the onsite server estate consolidated into an effective number of virtual servers housed in ITPS's data centre and linked via a 200MB line giving super-fast connection speeds. Software platforms were updated, files were migrated across and the majority of the work was carried out during school holidays, minimising any interruption to

school service and supporting a smooth implementation.

The result is that NPS now has a highly available IT infrastructure with improved internet speeds, better network resilience and fixed, predictable costs.

As part of the deal, ITPS provides a managed support service using sophisticated network management tools which monitor for and fix problems, backed up by a 24/7 helpdesk. NPS also has access to ITPS's fully equipped workspace recovery centre, so staff can relocate in the face of any kind of interruption at the school.

"They were very good at listening to what we wanted to do, and then proposing a solution that solved our problems. For instance, in common with many schools our in-house IT person also teaches and problems cannot always be dealt with immediately. As IT itself becomes more complicated, that became a bigger issue, so having access to a permanent helpdesk is particularly useful because we know problems will be dealt with immediately.

"We are still very much in control of our IT, but we trust ITPS to take responsibility. We also have the benefit of fixed IT costs far below what it would have cost us to replace like for like, and we often find that IT problems are resolved before we even know about them.

"That's a good position to be in, and one which frees us to get on with running a very successful school."

*Taking the decision to partner with ITPS was a good one.*







## BIG NAME TRIO BRING DATA DRIVEN BUSINESS CONFERENCE TO THE NORTH EAST



L to R – Jason Sullock (UK Marketing Manager), Nick Stevens (Sales Director), and Brad Forster (Managing Director).

On Tuesday 22 November 2016, technology experts 'ITPS', top Law firm 'Ward Hadaway', and data driven marketing specialists 'Hippo Marketing' will bring 'The Data Driven Business Conference' to The Core in Newcastle Upon Tyne.

**This half-day event has been specifically designed for senior management and brand marketers from companies looking to change, transform, and gain more value from their business data and marketing.**

"Every medium and large business in the North East has an enormous amount of data" said Brad Forster, Managing Director of Hippo and the event organiser, "but the way it's stored, secured, connected together, and used to drive growth and reduce overheads is beginning to shape their businesses like never before!

Understanding data and the insights it provides opens up both huge opportunities and dangerous pitfalls for North East businesses, so we're trying to help surface the essential expertise and skills that are needed to help survive these transformative changes, and drive business in our region for the next five to ten years.

That's why we've teamed up with two of the biggest 'hitters' from the North East on the subject... ITPS and Ward Hadaway."

Experts will showcase data strategy, predictive business intelligence, new data legislation, data driven marketing and open data. On show will be the latest business intelligence thinking, how it can boost your bottom line, and what you need to be aware of to avoid a messy run-in with forthcoming legislation.

After a series of short, punchy down-to-earth presentations, each of our speakers will host a series of 20-minute roundtables. These will be facilitated by the expert speakers, with the aim of making this as interactive as possible to create a valuable sharing experience.

"As a region, the North East is often accused of lagging behind London and the South East... but

that's simply not so" commented Nick Stevens of Hippo, "There's so much data and data driven marketing knowledge within our own area it's unbelievable! We just don't see it surface as much or as often as it could or should.

This is an opportunity for forward thinking CEOs, MDs and Heads of Marketing in the North East, to steal a march on what's coming and be prepared, whilst improving their profits, reducing their overheads and increasing their competitive advantage. Why wouldn't you want that?"

More information and tickets are available from [www.hippomarketing.eu/events](http://www.hippomarketing.eu/events). The Data Driven Business Conference is free, but spaces are limited to thirty-six attendees, with a maximum registration of two people per company.

If you have any questions regarding the event please email [jason.sullock@hippomarketing.eu](mailto:jason.sullock@hippomarketing.eu)



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## DYNAMIC PARTNERSHIP SET TO CREATE HIGH FLYING ENGINEERS OF THE FUTURE

Ford Engineering Group has chosen Gateshead College to form a dynamic partnership that aims to create the next generation of highly skilled workers, helping to keep the North East at the top of its game in high technology industries.

Ford Engineering Group is an internationally recognised company with a name that is celebrated across the precision machining and component manufacturing industries.

Since its inception in 1910, the firm has grown to become an award winning global specialist in high precision engineering and pressing of components for the aerospace, automotive, and other high technology industries. Among the high profile contracts on its books is the supply of parts for the world's most popular short haul commercial jet, the Airbus A320.

Ford recognises that its committed and highly skilled workforce is at the core of its success and that to uphold its reputation as one of the best in the business, continuous investment in employee training and development is vital.

Believing strongly in creating engineering career opportunities for young people as well as nurturing and educating its existing staff, Ford has chosen Gateshead College to be its training partner for apprenticeships, workforce development programmes and traineeships through the Ford Engineering Academy.

Using its expertise in engineering training provision, the College is designing and customising

a range of programmes aimed at preparing talented youngsters for the world of work, instilling a positive work ethos while equipping them with skills and knowledge in engineering fundamentals.

A workforce development programme will cater for existing staff, providing opportunities for upskilling people working across the factory floor as well as developing the managerial skills of team leaders and other senior employees.

Geoff Ford MBE, Chairman at Ford Engineering Group says: "I'm extremely passionate about supporting young people and offering them the chance to have a rewarding career in the engineering industry. I first opened the Ford Engineering Academy back in 2013 with the aim of identifying talented youngsters, bringing them into the business and training them to deliver exceptional levels of performance, service and quality for our customers.

"It's now time to refresh our training offer and I'm delighted to have Gateshead College on board as we set out to relaunch the Ford Engineering Academy. They have been highly supportive from the start, taking a proactive approach to understand in great detail how we operate and then identifying training solutions for both new and existing staff that will

help us to remain competitive and further increase the capabilities of our talented workforce."

The first cohort of apprentices started their training in September and split their time between Ford Engineering's sites and the college's Team Valley-based Skills Academy for Automotive, Engineering, Manufacturing and Logistics – a £5.5 million purpose built facility that has seen recent investment of more than £300,000 in state of the art machinery and tooling.

Upskilling programmes for existing staff kick off this month (October) and will see the traditional day release model changed to on-site training, meaning there is minimal disruption to the daily operations of the business. Traineeships are currently in development and will run from September 2017.

Ivan Jepson, Business Development Director at Gateshead College, adds: "The North East has a reputation for excellence in engineering and Ford in particular is recognised worldwide as one of the major players in the precision engineering industry.

"It's fantastic to be working with such a high calibre company and playing a key role in helping them to maintain their position as a global market leader for manufacturing and engineering."



# educashion



## YOUR CHILD'S FUTURE DEPENDS ON GETTING IT RIGHT.

As a parent, choosing the right school for your child can be one of the most important decisions you will make. We prefer a down to earth approach to education without the airs and graces. Because it helps us to discover each child's ability so we can help them do better. Our teachers are not just teachers to your child, rather guides and mentors, who steer them towards a fruitful future.

This is a school where children are respected as sons and daughters. A school where the Head teacher knows every child, parent and grandparent by name and each child is nurtured to become individuals of character. And it is a school where all abilities are given every opportunity to develop and progress to their full potential, be it in Academics or Extra curricular activities.

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SUNDERLAND





*“Learn. Achieve. Develop.”*



Michael Grahamslaw meets

## DAVID TICKNER

Headmaster of Newcastle School for Boys

### What was your background prior to joining Newcastle School for Boys?

I joined Newcastle School for Boys in 2006 shortly after its formation out of the merger between our two predecessor boys' prep schools: Ascham House and Newlands. My initial role at NSB was to establish the GCSE programme as we then extended the School's age range. Subsequently, I also became involved in helping to set up the School's Sixth Form. I came into post as Headmaster in April 2012.

Prior to joining NSB, I had been Head of Middle School at The Perse School, Cambridge, which was then a boys' school. I was there for five years having also spent eight years as an English and Games teacher and housemaster at Alleyn's – an independent co-educational day school in south east London. Before becoming a teacher I had worked in financial services for a number of years.

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

It has been very exciting to be involved in the setting up of a new school over the past ten years. The school has been established very successfully in a challenging and fast-changing marketplace. NSB has a distinctive ethos – warm and supportive. We maximise each individual boy's academic progress whilst at the same time developing their character. It has been particularly pleasing to see the demand for places at NSB grow – an indication of the quality of the all-round educational experience that we are providing.

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

These are many and varied. Some make headlines; others take place quietly but not unnoticed on a daily basis and tell of individual boys' progress and achievements. They don't make headlines but are no less important or significant for that.

We have just celebrated our best ever GCSE results with 59% of our boys achieving A\* to A grades and a third of these being A\* grades – our most common grade awarded. We also added a great deal of value in this summer's A level results. 51% of all grades were awarded A\* to B and the vast majority

of our university applicants achieved places at their chosen universities.

Away from the classroom, our boys have enjoyed many successes: individual and team on the sports field, in musical performance and in other areas such as the Duke of Edinburgh's award scheme. A particular highlight would be last year's Under 13 cricketers becoming North of England champions and reaching the semi-final of the national competition.

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

Ultimately, I believe that the most important aspect of education is the positive values and behaviours that we are able to instil in young people and that will help them to lead happy, fulfilled and successful lives.

### Summarise the core beliefs of NSB

Learn. Achieve. Develop.

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

Extra-curricular activities are a very important part of school life. In fact, we don't refer to them as extra-curricular, we refer to them as co-curricular – something that is enjoyed with the curriculum rather than being additional or bolted on to it. It is the co-curricular activities alongside our academic curriculum that does so much to develop our boys into young men of excellent character.

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

Most Headteachers come up through either an academic or a pastoral route. I came up largely through the pastoral route, particularly in the earlier stages of my career. Education is about so much more than just delivering exam results so I particularly welcome the recent emphasis and focus on young people's wellbeing.

### And what changes would you like to see going forward?

Most of all I would like to see education ceasing to become a political football and the constant state of change and uncertainty this imposes on children, schools and teachers. I would love to see an effective cross-party approach to education

that genuinely prioritised our children's and the country's needs.

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

We have just launched our plans for the next ten years of NSB's development. These will see the School continue to grow, whilst retaining its distinctive ethos and character. We will continue to pursue the highest standards of teaching and learning for boys – informed by the very best practice and research evidence and validated by our boys and parents. We will continue to invest in our buildings and facilities to provide the best possible environment for our boys, with the ultimate aim of creating a school that is housed on a single, purpose-designed site.

We have identified areas of particular specialism that we are seeking to develop. These are in science, technology, engineering and Mathematics (STEM), business and entrepreneurship, media and sport. Some of these are already identified strengths of the School and we are seeking to take these forward for the future opportunities and benefits they provide for our boys and the region.

We are seeking to continue to broaden our co-curricular programme and provide the very best pastoral care that supports boys' personal development and wellbeing through planned programmes that develop the qualities in our boys to allow them to be happy and fulfilled in their lives. It will allow them to be able to meet the many and particular challenges and pressures faced by young people growing up today. We are also developing a programme of service for our boys to make a genuine contribution to their community and that helps them to understand and appreciate their own position and opportunities.

### Away from the office/classroom, how do you like to relax?

I love living in the north east. I live at the coast with my family: wife, Caroline, also a teacher, and our two daughters. At the weekends, we can often be found on the beach at Tynemouth walking our dog. As an English teacher, one of my passions is reading and literature. I am also a big sports fan and enjoy the access to sport that the region provides.

# CHOOSING THE RIGHT PRIMARY SCHOOL FOR YOUR DAUGHTER

Assistant Head of Westfield Junior House Clare Baines, offers a jargon buster for parents



## We hear lots of different education terminology, please explain.

**GCSE and A Level:** These are the national secondary public examinations in England and, generally, without at least five GCSEs, including English and Maths, it is hard to get a job or an apprenticeship these days.

At Westfield our A Level results put us fifth nationally for small independent schools. Over 48% of the grades awarded to Westfield girls were at A and A\*. Our GCSE students were also fantastic this year achieving 90% A\* to C grades, including English and Maths. Many schools advertise their pass rates but some do not include English and Maths nor the number of the highest grades (A\* to A).

Westfield is a non-selective school which means that we welcome girls from all academic backgrounds. We ensure that all girls settle quickly into school life and, with individualised support, achieve the high quality results that has seen us top the league tables in Newcastle and Northumberland.

**KS1 SATS:** These take place at the end of Year 2 and are used as a Government measure of standards. They are a basic measurement of progress.

**KS2 SATS:** At the end of Year 6, all children are assessed in English (reading and writing), SPAG (spelling, punctuation and grammar) and Maths. Westfield achieved well above the national average and exceeded previous year's results. This means that every girl at Westfield leaves our Junior House highly skilled in literacy and numeracy and well ahead of her national counterparts.

## What is it about the Westfield experience that makes these achievements possible?

We achieve these results because at Westfield, not only do we have really committed and skilled

teachers, but we raise girls' aspirations. If a girl's mind is enriched by the creative intellect provided through Westfield's extra-curricular activities, this complements their academic achievement which helps her to grow and flourish for her journey beyond Westfield. Amongst the many clubs and extra-curricular activities on offer is our Chess, Fencing and Engineering and Construction Clubs.

## What makes Westfield different, what is it that makes it a special place to be?

It is hard to sum this up in one sentence, but there are many aspects to our school and what that means for a girl. Our academic performance is obviously important; that is how we are measured, but we believe that the "school experience" is so much more than that. It is about knowing how to bring out the best in everyone, nurture the less confident ones, challenge and bring aspiration, open a girl's mind and make sure each girl knows how important she is as an individual.

## Talk to us about open days, what should a parent be looking out for on their visit?

Choosing the right school can be a tricky one. Some parents will have checked ISI or DfE information prior to turning up at an open day but, more likely than not, they will have received recommendations through word of mouth. It is important to know that it is difficult to judge a school on a first visit but the feel you get for a school is important. Some schools will have fantastic displays on their classroom walls on open day but not during the

rest of the year. Some schools will have dazzling and high tech facilities but soulless corridors and average results.

Probably the most important factor is how the staff relate to the children. Are they interested in your child? Does your child respond enthusiastically to them? Parents should also visit during the school day and take advantage of taster days for their children. At Westfield parents and girls are welcome to visit us at a time to suit them.

Remember, what is best for one child isn't necessarily best for another. Every child has different strengths and weaknesses and it is important the school provides the right environment for them to thrive in. That is partly down to academic ability but also to a caring pastoral system. At Westfield we make sure that parents are well informed about their daughters' education and emotional well-being every step of the way.

## Primary vs Junior, Kindergarten vs Reception

At Westfield we use the term Junior House as the word House emphasises that we are an extended family and we are based in a former Victorian family house. Kindergarten, is the traditional word for what everyone knows as 'reception'. We like to keep some old fashioned terms ...

As a teacher with many years' experience and a parent, I know how hard it can be to choose the right school. Westfield follows a small school structure and it is because of this ethos that we do so well.

*...it's just another reason why we are special and we are the hidden gem in the heart of Gosforth*





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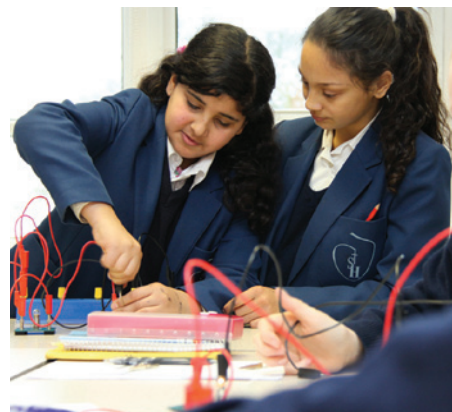
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## IN PURSUIT OF EXCELLENCE FOR YOUNG WOMEN: DESTINATIONS 2016

Our worldwide network of Sacred Heart schools was established in the 1800s and has always devoted itself to the pursuit of excellence and the education of women, in order to give our students, the very best life chances. This is still at the heart of what we do today: we recognise that a great education has the power to transform women's lives and from our past alumnae and the destinations of our 2016 leavers, it is something we are very successful at doing.

Our focus on students undertaking worthwhile, appropriate subjects and achieving to the highest standard, means that our girls have been able to take up aspirational places at top universities across our region and beyond. Of this year's excited crop of new undergraduates from Sacred Heart, half will attend courses at Russell Group universities, with nearly a third remaining within our region and leaving us for Newcastle, Durham and Edinburgh.

### Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths

Educational research suggests that girls from single sex schools are more likely to take up STEM subjects post 16 and Sacred Heart certainly has a strong tradition of sending girls onto careers in these disciplines. As usual, a very large proportion

of our students, almost a third, have left us this year for Science based courses. Traditionally girls leave us for medicine and pharmaceutical careers but the number of girls choosing Computer Science and Engineering is growing.

### Oxford and Cambridge success

We support students who wish to apply for our top universities, with a well-established programme of interview preparation tailored to individual students and courses, which is led by an experienced team of staff. This year, three students were successful with Katie Forsyth and Anna Tweedy securing places at Oxford to read German with Arabic, and Chinese respectively. Whilst Joanna Ward will be reading Music at Cambridge.

We would like to leave the final word to last year's Head Girl, Amy Baird. Amy was a remarkable student and sportswoman who gained a place at Loughborough to study Sports Science.

*"Sacred Heart helps students become confident, adaptive and resilient: women who are ready to lead society. We are truly privileged and proud to be pupils here and will always be grateful for everything that the school has done for us. We have the knowledge that we have been given nothing but the best and as a result, we know that there is nothing stopping us from being the best."*



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- Large numbers of girls study Science, Technology & Maths subjects
- High participation rates in a vast range of extra curricular activities: sport; music; art; drama
- Working partnership with the Royal Shakespeare Company
- An ethos which values and develops the uniqueness of every single girl

If you would like to know more about us, or to arrange a visit please contact us...

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# OPEN DAYS AT RGS

Once again, Newcastle upon Tyne Royal Grammar School (RGS) is opening its doors to prospective parents this autumn, offering them the chance to see the fantastic facilities the school has to offer.

RGS is a leading independent day school for boys and girls aged 7 - 18 years just a short distance from the City centre. Located in leafy suburb Jesmond, just across the Great North Road from the Town Moor, the School benefits from excellent transport links that sees students choosing to study at RGS from all over the North East.

The School is thriving, with over 1300 students, including more than 250 in the Junior School, and one of the largest Sixth Forms in the independent sector with more than 340 students. RGS became fully co-educational in 2008 and girls now make up over a third of the student population.

RGS is a special place, known and respected throughout the whole country as well as the North East, where aspirations are high, results are outstanding and

opportunities are endless. Expectations are high and students go on to study highly selective courses at the most sought-after universities, but also leave RGS realising that life outside the classroom has been equally beneficial.

If you are interested in seeing what the school has to offer, as well as meeting the staff who will set your children on their journey through education alongside students who are already experiencing life at RGS; then attend one of the open events this autumn. Information evenings will be held on Tuesday 8th and Monday 14th November, with an open morning on Saturday 19th November. The Junior School will hold its annual open week from Monday 21st to Friday 25th November, giving perspective parents the opportunity to see the school on a typical working day.



For more information and to book please visit, [www.rgs.newcastle.sch.uk](http://www.rgs.newcastle.sch.uk) or call 0191 212 8968

## ENGAGING THE SHARPEST MINDS

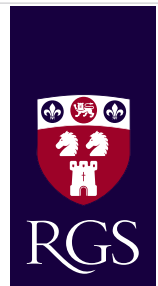
JOIN US FOR OUR  
2016 OPEN EVENTS

**Open Morning**  
Saturday 19 November

**Information Evenings**  
Tuesday 8 & Monday 14 November

**Junior School Open Week**  
Monday 21 - Friday 25 November

**Book a visit, attend  
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# OPTIMA PHEV

## SET TO DRIVE SALES AT JENNINGS KIA



Steven Flack, Franchise Manager at Jennings Kia in Stockton, with the Optima PHEV.

Jennings Kia, part of the multi-award winning Jennings Motor Group, has taken delivery of Kia's first plug-in Hybrid model – the Optima PHEV.

Kia's mission to lower the average CO2 emissions of its range by 25 per cent before the end of the decade has been given a boost with the launch of the company's first plug-in hybrid model, the Optima PHEV (plug-in hybrid electric vehicle).

The latest model is on display and available to test drive at Jennings Kia's dealerships in Stockton and Washington.

The new Optima PHEV, is priced at £31,495, after taking into account the Government's £2,500 plug-in car grant.

Steven Flack, franchise manager at Jennings Kia's dealership in Stockton, said: "To offer Kia's first plug-in hybrid model is hugely exciting for our sales teams at Stockton and Washington.

"We know that drivers across Teesside and Wearside are increasingly conscious of fuel economy and styling, active safety technologies and high level of specification and the new Optima PHEV is a fantastic offering."

With a range of up to 33 miles in all-electric mode, the Optima PHEV is able to complete many regular urban commuter runs with no tailpipe emissions, while its CO2 figure of just 37g/km means company car users pay just 7 per cent benefit-in-kind taxation in 2016/2017.

The Optima PHEV combines a 154bhp 2.0-litre direct injection petrol engine with a 50kW (67bhp) electric motor powered by a 9.8kWh lithium-ion polymer battery pack. The electric motor replaces the torque converter in the smooth-shifting six-speed automatic transmission. When working together, the combustion engine and motor generate 202bhp and 375Nm of torque.

A package of aerodynamic, styling and technology features contribute towards the Optima PHEVs low CO2 emissions and potential fuel economy of up to 176.6mpg while ensuring it is instantly recognisable as the high-efficiency model in the Optima range.

The Optima PHEV is one of the most technologically advanced cars Kia has ever launched in the UK. The Optima family is available with a comprehensive range of connectivity and advanced driver assistance features, including an 8.0-inch touch-screen navigation system with European mapping, Android Auto, Apple CarPlay, Kia Connected Services powered by TomTom, a wireless mobile phone charger, a 270° around-view monitor and a 10-speaker harman/kardon Premium Sound audio system. It is laden with advanced features to keep the driver and passengers connected with the outside world, to advance their comfort

and convenience and to help drivers achieve the maximum all-electric driving range.

In keeping with every Kia model, the Optima PHEV comes with the manufacturer's unique-in-the-UK seven-year or 100,000-mile warranty, subject to certain wear and tear conditions. The warranty is fully transferable should the car be sold before the time or mileage limits have been reached.

Other models available in the Kia model line-up and available at Jennings Kia's dealerships, include the Picanto, Rio, Soul, Venga, cee'd GT, new cee'd, cee'd Sportswagon, new pro\_cee'd and pro\_cee'd GT, in addition to the Sorento, Optima, Sportage and all-new petrol-electric Niro hybrid.

The car is available with Kia's Care-3 and Care-3 Plus servicing packages, offering retail customers fixed-cost, inflation-proof servicing for the first three or five years, which is available at Jennings Kia.

In addition to housing the full new Kia car line-up at the Jennings Kia dealerships, customers can also take advantage of a range of quality approved used cars.

There is also a range of aftersales facilities with service, MOT and parts departments available at both dealerships.

For more information about the range of products and services available at Jennings Kia, contact Stockton on 01642 632299, Washington on 0191 5525800, or visit [www.jenningsmotorgroup.co.uk](http://www.jenningsmotorgroup.co.uk)



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<sup>^</sup>Offer available on test drives taken at Jennings Kia between 1st October – 31st December 2016 only for cars registered by 31st December 2016. Terms and conditions apply. <sup>^^</sup>For more information about the Government plug-in car grant visit [www.gov.uk/plug-in-car-van-grants](http://www.gov.uk/plug-in-car-van-grants). †Kia Warranty: 7 Year/100,000 mile manufacturers warranty. Manufacturer's terms and conditions apply. This offer supersedes any previously advertised offers/discounts. Retail customers only. Subject to availability. Model year restrictions may apply. May exclude 2016 model year offers. Car not necessarily as illustrated. Offer ends 31st December 2016. E&OE.





## THE VOLVO XC90 HAS THE X FACTOR

BY NEETA ARORA

My first car was a Volvo 340, it wasn't the most obvious choice for a young lass who had just passed her test. A few things stick in my mind about that car, the car was built like a tank but the seats were very comfortable. Because it was as aerodynamic as a breeze block I remember it being noisy at speed.

The other thing that sticks in my mind is the fact that all Volvo's & Saab's used to have daytime running lights. This is the norm now with all manufacturers giving cars quite funky led lights indeed. When the Volvo XC90 was launched over 10 years ago it became a real sales success. It totally surpassed Volvo's sales expectations and waiting lists quickly formed.

Owners were able to buy the car and either sell it for a profit or keep it for a year and not lose a penny. This car just pressed all the right buttons for owners, it was nice enough to look at and it was very family focused. As this car is so well loved by current owners this latest Volvo XC 90 had a lot to live up to. Imagine the pressure the designers and engineers were under to get the new car right. Up until about 6 years ago Volvo was owned by Ford and it was the height of the credit crunch. In their wisdom they decided to sell off Land Rover, Jaguar and Volvo.

A Chinese company called Geely bought Volvo, after considerable investment they will soon see some rewards. The new XC90 now looks very menacing from the front although the rear looks very similar to the current model. Step inside and it's a very different matter. The interior just oozes quality, none of the cars competitors can get anywhere close to it at all.

The XC90 is the first car to use a new platform called SPAR - I believe there is no connection however to

the convenience stores!! Volvo have fitted the car with new much more efficient engines, a hybrid version is also available. This promises amazing economy but there is a £10,000 premium to pay, that may outweigh the potential savings to be made. The Diesel engines promise 50mpg plus economy and the hybrid promises over 112mpg.

All cars feature 4-wheel drive and they all have 8 speed gearboxes as standard. In the UK we get 7 seats but in some markets the car is only available with 5 seats. The rear two seats are ideal for anyone under 5ft 8" unlike most competitors who can only accommodate children.

Just to prove how family friendly this car is, the second row seat can be supplied with a child seat. With the 3rd row seats up, there is still enough room for some bags or a buggy. With the seats folded this car has estate car rivalling space. There is also a handy divider that can be flipped up to stop smaller items from sliding around the boot. Being so family friendly this car has loads space for storage dotted around the cabin.

The car's standard suspension is very good on our terrible roads, after driving a car with air suspension I would be tempted to opt for that as it makes the ride quality even better especially when the largest alloys are fitted to the car. Anyone using the car off road can also increase the cars ride height by 40mm which may help if the car is struggling off road. Back to the car's interior and the stunning use

of leather and metal make this place a real joy to sit inside. Driving for hours in this environment is just so relaxing and it just oozes class.

The dashboard only has 8 buttons and everything is controlled by what looks like a tablet. The home screen controls everything from the navigation to the excellent sound system. The XC90 is a big old beast and the driving position is excellent, you sit very high in the car and you have a commanding view of the road ahead. Volvo are not famed for making sporty cars but in its R Design trim the car looks amazing. It is also available in either Momentum, gives the car leather upholstery, climate control, Bluetooth, Sat Nav, 10 speakers and MP3 player. Inception gives the car larger alloys, memory seats and plusher interior.

The R Design adds a sportier look inside and out. Being a Volvo the cars trump card is safety, there are air bags all over this car, anti whip lash headrests, lane departure warning, blind spot monitoring. Volvo's trump card has to be its city safe system.

The system applies the brakes if it senses someone or something stepping out in front of you. According to Volvo this car is most safety focused Volvo ever! If you are looking for something other than a X5 or a Q7 this car really should be on your shopping list. From its macho new looks to its stunning interior this car has the X Factor in abundance!

This car is supplied by Mill Volvo. For more information visit [www.volvocarsnewcastle.co.uk](http://www.volvocarsnewcastle.co.uk)



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## SHANE RITCHIE RETURNS TO NEWCASTLE THEATRE ROYAL

Following his role in the hugely successful nationwide tour of *The Perfect Murder* earlier this year, award-winning actor Shane Richie is set to return to Newcastle Theatre Royal as Peter James' famous literary Detective Superintendent Roy Grace in the thrilling *Not Dead Enough* (Mon 20 – Sat 25 March 2017).

Best known for his role as Alfie Moon in *EastEnders*, Shane will star alongside Laura Whitmore as Cleo Morey in the third thrilling stage adaptation of multi-million selling author Peter James' novel.

On the night Brian Bishop murdered his wife, he claims that he was sixty miles away asleep in bed. But as Detective Superintendent Roy Grace continues to deal with the mysterious disappearance of his own wife, he starts to dig a little deeper into the chilling murder case and it soon becomes clear that love can be a dangerous thing.

Shane said: "I'm thrilled to be asked to play one of the most interesting and innovative characters of modern times. I've never read a Peter James book and not been taken on a journey of menace and excitement and a roller coaster of thrills and chills!"

Peter James said: "I'm delighted Shane Richie is going to be playing the role of Detective Superintendent Roy Grace in the forthcoming stage adaptation of my novel *Not Dead Enough*. Shane is a wonderful actor and I think he has that combination of warmth, toughness and deeply innate compassionate humanity that defines Roy."



## KINGS OF LEON ANNOUNCE ARENA TOUR

**Kings of Leon have announced UK arena tour dates for 2017, their first UK shows in over two years, including a date at the Metro Radio Arena on Friday 24th February 2017.**

The multi-platinum selling band released their highly anticipated seventh studio album 'WALLS' on 14 Oct through Columbia Records. The Grammy Award winning group decided to return to their recording roots in Los Angeles and worked with famed producer Markus Dravs (Arcade Fire, Coldplay, Florence and the Machine). The album has received widespread critical acclaim with NME declaring, 'the Kings are well and truly back' and Rolling Stone describing the new music as, 'Kings at their best'.

Tickets costing £45, £55 & £65 are available online, from the booking hotline number 0844 493 6666 or in person from the Metro Radio Arena Box Office.



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## LIVERPUDLIAN LEGEND SET TO PERFORM AT METRO RADIO ARENA

Comedy superstar John Bishop is set to return to Newcastle Metro Radio Arena (8-9 Nov 2017) as he announces his long-awaited return to stand-up comedy with a brand new live show *Winging It*.

On announcing *Winging It*, John said: "When I start this new tour, it will be three years since my last live show *Supersonic*, which is the longest break I've ever had. I'm very much looking forward to getting back on the road. There really is nothing like performing stand-up in front of a live audience!"

*Winging It* will see John back on stage for his fifth UK tour, performing in his own unique style. His last tour *Supersonic* was watched by more than 500,000 people and received huge critical acclaim.

John has had an incredible career. Within three years of his first ever comedy gig, he was playing to sold out arena audiences across the country and released the fastest selling stand-up DVD in UK history.

John also recently turned his hand to something completely different, interviewing. A new series called 'John Bishop: In Conversation With...' sees him chatting, one on one, with some of the UK's biggest names.

Tickets costing from £25.00 are on sale now.

## RECORD OF THE MONTH - TOM CHAPLIN 'THE WAVE'



With pop-rock outfit Keane seemingly still on hiatus, the band's frontman Tom Chaplin has released 'The Wave', his first solo offering. And, for a man who dubbed the experience "a daunting prospect for someone who knows nothing else" it really is rather good. Considering the majority of the Keane oeuvre was written by keyboardist Tim Rice-Oxley there was certainly a few question marks over Chaplin's credentials as a songwriter, however from this it's evident that the boy can pen a canny tune in his own right.

Inspired primarily by Chaplin's well-documented battles with drink and drugs, fans of Keane will be pleased to know that the album mainly centres around mid-temp piano driven ballads on which Chaplin delivers with real aplomb.

A notable example of this can be found on lead-single "Quicksand", on which Chaplin's trademark soaring vocals are fused with lyrics steeped in realism. Other highlights include the raw and affecting "Hardened Heart" alongside the synth-heavy track "The River" with a potent mix of darkness and redemption making this a hugely worthwhile listen. As part of his intimate UK tour, Chaplin is set to play The Sage Gateshead on May 11th 2017. Be there.

## What's on this November?

**KT Tuntstall**

November 2

Sage Gateshead T: (0191) 443 4661  
[www.sagegateshead.com](http://www.sagegateshead.com)

**The Queen Extravaganza**

November 4

Newcastle City Hall T: (0191) 277 8030  
[www.newcastlecityhall.org](http://www.newcastlecityhall.org)

**Beauty & The Beast**

November 8-12

Newcastle Theatre Royal T: (0844) 8112 121  
[www.theatreroyal.co.uk](http://www.theatreroyal.co.uk)

**Roy Wood**

November 12

Whitley Bay Playhouse T: (0844) 248 1588  
[www.playhousewhitleybay.co.uk](http://www.playhousewhitleybay.co.uk)

**Bastille**

November 13

Metroradio Arena T: (0844) 493 6666  
[www.metroradioarena.co.uk](http://www.metroradioarena.co.uk)

**Deacon Blue**

November 14

Newcastle City Hall T: (0191) 277 8030  
[www.newcastlecityhall.org](http://www.newcastlecityhall.org)

**Encore**

November 15-19

The Custom's House T: (0191) 454 1234  
[www.customshouse.co.uk](http://www.customshouse.co.uk)

**The Lady in the Van**

November 15-19

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

**James & The Giant Peach**

November 19- December 31

Northern Stage T: (0191) 230 5151  
[www.northernstage.co.uk](http://www.northernstage.co.uk)

**Simply Red**

November 22

Metroradio Arena T: (0844) 493 6666  
[www.metroradioarena.co.uk](http://www.metroradioarena.co.uk)

**Glenn Tilbrook**

November 25

Sage Gateshead T: (0191) 443 4661  
[www.sagegateshead.com](http://www.sagegateshead.com)

**Jess Glynne**

November 25

Metroradio Arena T: (0844) 493 6666  
[www.metroradioarena.co.uk](http://www.metroradioarena.co.uk)

**Dr Hook**

November 26

Newcastle City Hall T: (0191) 277 8030  
[www.newcastlecityhall.org](http://www.newcastlecityhall.org)

**Chicago**

November 28- December 3

Sunderland Empire T: (0191) 566 1040  
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# ARTWORK FOR PROFESSIONALS



It has been an exciting few weeks at Commission an Artist. Firstly it was our 7th birthday at the end of September and we are very proud to have reached this point. We reminisce back to the days when we completed our first commission – which we don't mind telling you was catastrophic! So we stopped operations and worked for 6 months on providing a great process for customers and artists.

Seven years on and we have over 700 artists from all over the world. The beauty about this is the diversity of artwork we can offer, artists from around the world have a huge variety of styles due to the variety of artistic influences in their diverse lives. For you, this means that you may have a great idea but you're not so sure about the style you prefer – do you want it as an illustration/realistic/abstract/cartoon?

Maybe you know for certain, but other times you might just want to have a glimpse at how your artwork would look in all of these styles and more. That's why we offer rough sketches to you, so you pick an artist(s) and ask for a rough sketch for your particular project. This gives you a great feel for how the final piece will look before launching into the full commission.

The second piece of excitement is that we have had a surge in professionals looking for artwork. We have completed three commissions for the medical profession and we are working on a further piece for lawyers, barristers, and other legal professionals.

The link between art and medicine goes way back with (amongst others) Leonardo da Vinci famously producing detailed drawings of the human body, presented in a highly artistic way. Similarly today,

those who love their profession want to view a great artistic piece which epitomises how they feel and what the industry is all about.

If you look closely at our image of the drawing of the man and his muscles you will see that everything is done in the colours of autumn and with autumn leaves. The customer wanted something that would reflect the season but also show the detail of the human body. The image of the heart was created for a tattoo, and we think is a simply stunning piece, which would look great on any wall (maybe without the arrows, but even so).

The final piece of artwork here was completed for the front cover of a medical journal based in Liverpool, so they wanted something that represented Liverpool and medicine. This is the final result which they really loved.

## Christmas

We hate to bring this up already, but it is coming up to that time of year. In order to ensure delivery for Christmas we need orders in now, as we like to have 6 weeks at least to produce the artwork. Some commissions don't take anywhere near this long, however the more time you can give us the better. We can produce any piece of artwork you like and

it is a very special gift. Last year we produced a caricature of a customer's family, and we think it would look really great to do the same for staff teams. You can also get a print made for each of your staff to take home. It's just one idea of saying thank you for everyone's hard work over the year.

*Helen Johnson, Commission an Artist.*

Commission an Artist are professional and experienced project managers, so to get them involved visit [www.commissionanartist.co.uk](http://www.commissionanartist.co.uk)

[www.twitter.com/uk\\_artists](https://twitter.com/uk_artists)

[www.facebook.com/commissionanartist](https://www.facebook.com/commissionanartist)

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To speak with us about your art project please email [info@commissionanartist.co.uk](mailto:info@commissionanartist.co.uk) or telephone us on 01325 495639 and we will get the ball rolling for you.



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## THE FIGHTER AND THE WRITER

After enjoying The Merchants Tavern at St.Peters Basin last month our intrepid pair continue their tour of the regions culinary hotspots. For November, they check out The Broad Chare on Newcastle's Quayside.



**The Broad Chare is a fascinating pub just off Newcastle's historic bustling Quayside.**

Part of Terry Laybourne's empire, a bar of stripped floors and exposed brickwork greets you upon walking through its doors. Upstairs is a dining room of simple style with solid wood tables, sturdy schoolroom chairs, and shiny brass coat-hooks.

It boasts quite rightly of handsome starters, hearty main courses, and old fashioned puddings, so our intrepid pair were greatly looking forward to tucking in their napkins.

Gibbo began with crab soup at six quid while Glenn went a bit more exotic with pig's head and sauce gribiche for £6.80. Both highly satisfying and great starters for a more than pleasant evening.

On to the mains and it was dry aged ribeye with water cress, steak butter, chips and onion rings for

the Fighter (£19.50) and grilled calves liver, onions and bacon (£16) for the Writer.

"A traditional meal, I know, but nothing like school dinners," smiled Gibbo. "The liver fell off the fork it was so tender, nothing like my school experience when you could have soled your shoes with the liver dished up!"

There were extremes for those of adventure. For example, a seven-hour slow cooked roast lamb shoulder at £75 for "five-ish" people or a red legged partridge with mash and choucroute, value for money at £17.

We decided to wash all down with a nice bottle of red wine, Tempranillo, at £17.15p

There was just about enough room left to stagger on to the puds. For McCrory it was Victoria plum crumble and custard (£5.50) now he has to no

longer make cruiserweight on the scales. Whilst Gibbo went for a cheeseboard and port. A perfect finale.

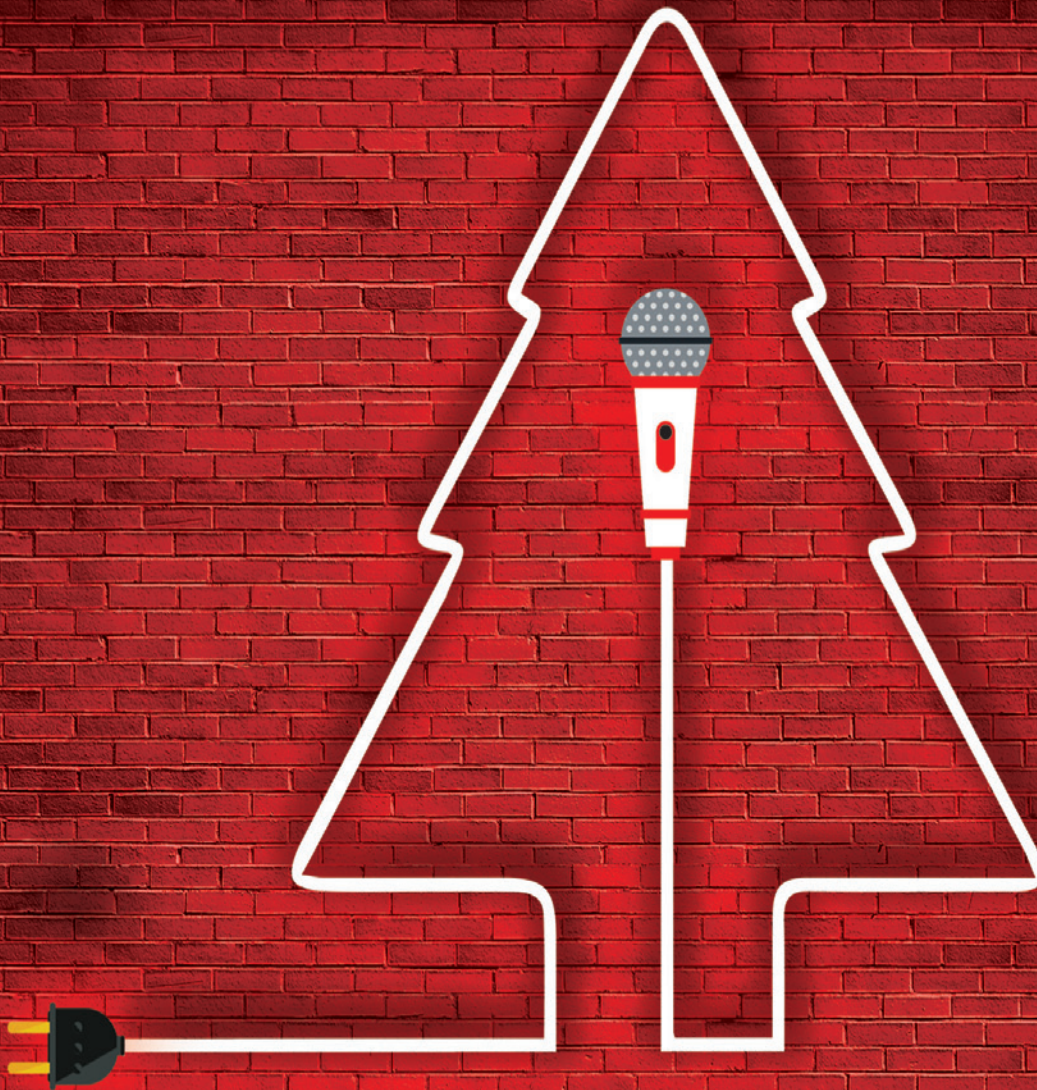
Even though it was a Monday evening such is The Broad Chare's reputation that it was bustling with customers knowing the food menu went from bar snacks full of flavour like hand-raised pork pies, Scotch eggs, and cauliflower fritters to lunchtimes and evenings in the restaurant with daily specials such as Thursday's steak and kidney pudding.

"What The Broad Chare has is a proper boozier downstairs with real ales while upstairs is a high-end pub restaurant typical of Terry Laybourne," enthused Glenn. "We've both visited Caffè Vivo and Café 21 in Fenwicks and the cross section of food available at all three is quite exceptional."

If you would like Glenn and Gibbo to review your venue, please contact Mike on [mjgrahamslaw@outlook.com](mailto:mjgrahamslaw@outlook.com) to co-ordinate



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# ACAPULCO - BEAUTY & THE BEAST

by Travel Writer, Ken Spearen

Acapulco is still near the top of most people's dream holiday list. Its name epitomises the romance and excitement that attracted so many to its sandy shores in the past. It is indeed a beautiful place but it's not without its drawbacks.



The resort city is situated on Mexico's Pacific Ocean coast, set on a large bay surrounded by the Sierra Madre del Sur Mountains. It is remembered as one of Mexico's oldest and most well-known beach resorts that first came to prominence in the 1950/60s as the playground of Hollywood stars, playboys and millionaires. It remains a favourite "bucket list" holiday destination with many and still attracts lots of tourists but these days, mostly from Mexico itself.

The resort area is divided into two. The northern end of the bay is the "traditional" area, where the rich and famous used to party decades ago whilst the southern end is dominated by newer luxury high-rise hotels.

The name "Acapulco" derives from the Nahuatl language meaning "where the reeds were destroyed or washed away" and a portrayal of these can still be found on the City's official seal to this day.

Although made famous by the jet set two generations ago, it's still renowned for its high-energy nightlife, gorgeous beach-babe culture and golf. Although, Ibiza it is not.

Its iconic La Quebrada Cliff is the place where dare devil performers dive 40m into shallow waves twice a day. It takes a huge amount of courage, skill and belief and although I've seen it many times on TV, it's nothing like the real thing. Awesomely dangerous and it almost puts bungee jumping in the sedentary category.

Although free to watch, its divers line up for a tip at the end of each show. For the experience they provide, it would be churlish not to give them something.

We stayed at the stunning 4-star Aztec-inspired Fairmount Acapulco Princess high on a cliff overlooking the bay and beach. This resort is set on nearly 500 acres of prime real estate complete with its own championship golf course. It also boasts eight tennis courts, five swimming pools and a health spa. To give you an idea of size, it has over 1,000 fully air-conditioned bedrooms with all mod cons including in-room safes which regrettably are a must. Its decor pays homage to Aztec culture with native tile work, architecture and artwork very much in evidence. All rooms have balconies. The hotel has so much to offer that I cannot do it justice in the space allotted but the fact that coach parties from nearby hotels constantly arrived for guided tours around ours says much about its standing in Acapulco.

One morning while relaxing around the pool gazing up at the Aztec designed hotel façade directly above me, a small earth tremor occurred. My wife thought I was shaking her sun deck chair as a joke but she soon discovered the truth from some Californians sat nearby who didn't turn a hair. Apparently, it was an everyday occurrence for them and one they experience up to 20 times a day. For us, it was quite remarkable and somewhat unnerving. To break the ice, a fellow Brit raised a nervous smile from all who

witnessed the event when he announced that it was the first time the earth had moved for his wife in ages! Despite this dubious adventure, as recommended by the hotel, we mainly stayed within our hotel's wonderful grounds for security reasons. This was easy to adhere to and didn't impinge on our enjoyment. The only exception was an organised "highlights" trip but we found the town had little to recommend itself. The majority of people here are poor and mothers try to support their families by selling lemonade on the streets and on the beach. Our Mexican tour guide advised against supporting this as it was made from "highly unsuitable" street water. As much as you want to, giving them money is also not an option unless you like being pursued everywhere you go by hordes of kids and beach sellers.

Overall Acapulco is a complete paradox. It cannot be denied that it is one of the most beautiful places in the world but it is also a most dangerous one too. Statistically, it is the second most violent city in South America with a murder rate 28 times higher than the US average. These are mostly drug and gang-related deaths in its working class areas and as a result, most popular tourist areas (including our hotel) are vigilantly patrolled by armed Mexican Federal police. Although I didn't experience it personally, I was shown photos of rear-mounted machine guns on the back of police pick-up trucks. Scary stuff and not exactly conducive to a safe relaxing holiday. But that said, where is these days?







## TRAINING THE AIRPORT WAY



John Purdy, Commercial Training Manager at Newcastle International Airport oversees a Training Academy which most of us would believe is exclusively for the use of the airport itself. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Over the years, the facility has grown to be an important hub to attract companies needing to develop and train staff in a number of different disciplines, "Commercial businesses across the board can come to our facility for general safety training, from fire warden courses and first aid to IOSH. Our courses are accredited and recognised as the best in the field," says John.

With such courses on offer the Academy has attracted clients locally, nationally and internationally for its training provision. Whether it's an individual looking personally for first aid training or large industrial concerns such as Proctor & Gamble, the facility prides itself on delivering exactly what the client requires.

The airport has environmental permissions to burn kerosene and these cover other environmental issues which means a client who needs fire fighting teams trained to the highest standards, will be able

to experience real quality fire control methods, thus providing team building for their operatives.

In fact the team bonding days the academy provides, can be used for any business or organisation looking to improve esprit de corps amongst its staff. Hull Kingston Rovers and Durham County Cricket Club have taken advantage of these days as well as commercial businesses like Draeger Safety. It could be sales staff, warehouse operatives or administration employees, the indoor facilities allow for good indoor work as well as the practical work done outside. They can have a great sales meeting, then don fire kit and have a good session which also teaches real fire safety to a large number of their staff.

For potential clients looking for training or team building days the Training Academy does have its own website which has comprehensive information to see what's on offer and to book a course, they

also attend chamber of commerce network days. [www.newcastleairport.com/training-academy](http://www.newcastleairport.com/training-academy).

"We have full time instructors, part time instructors in various backgrounds at the Training Academy and length of courses vary according to the discipline being taught." John advises, "We've also branched out into wildlife management, particularly where birds are concerned. Everyone knows the danger of bird strike and we teach City & Guilds, bird scaring courses and techniques to other aviation facilities across the globe as well as marshalling courses etc."

Many courses are conducted very close to the airport taxiways and take off areas, so participants have a chance to observe aircraft as the course is delivered. It's a popular aspect of the Academies work.

Companies looking for quality training provision or team bonding can be safe in the knowledge Newcastle Airport is close at hand.

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## OUT & ABOUT – OYSTERS, NATIONAL RAIL AND A MAP FOR CHRISTMAS

Many people know that Chester-le-Track is run by a private company, Chester-le-Track Ltd., which now also runs Eaglescliffe station in the Tees Valley. From those two locations, skilled travel consultants can plan and book rail journeys across the UK at prices which frequently undercut the online booking engines by clever use of the rules for issuing tickets. What is not more generally known is that Chester-le-Track has three other tricks up its sleeve: Oyster cards for London, the nationalrail.com website and our National Rail map which is an ideal Christmas present for anyone interested in railways and/or the geography of Great Britain.

We started selling Oysters in 2006, when the product was new, and it was not even explicitly stated whether people who lived outside London could actually have one. At the time, only 35% of Londoners had one and all the effort was being made to sell to residents in the capital and regular commuters from outside. When Chester-le-Track started buying them in London and shipping them up to the north east, the nascent Transport for London summoned me to the 55 Broadway headquarters to account for myself, but careful

study of their terms and conditions got us off the hook. We protested that Oysters should be on sale anywhere, and, as a result even visitBritain now sells Visitor Oyster cards all over the world.

Secondly, nationalrail.com was first registered in 1999, fortuitously before the British Rail brand was relaunched as National Rail, and indeed is being promoted more than ever before. The website sells the whole range of tickets, but you can avoid debit and credit card fees, booking fees and have tickets mailed to your nominated address by phoning Chester-le-Street station (0191 387 1387) or Eaglescliffe station (01642 200140) during opening hours and book your tickets whilst speaking to a Real Person, and an expert too.

But it's the National Rail map, issued as a poster (635mm x 1000mm) which is the flagship for Chester-le-Track now, with not only every one of over 2500 stations shown on the same side of the map, but separate lines and colours used for every Train Operating Company, every station in Northern Ireland included, every PlusBus interchange shown in green, every TOC logo and website.

It started with a need for a quick method to

identify where rail tickets could be used on buses at interchange stations. I read about a schoolboy who had drawn a new network map in Windows Paint, and contacted then 16 year old Luke Gardner to see if he wanted to get the map into print. Luke is now a train planner with TransPennine Express, and we went through quite a process to get the map redrawn and ready for print, including an abortive exercise with a company called Railroute which experimented with online journey planning using the map. But it's the printed map which has been the best seller over the years, and excluding postage cost (which for a 25 inch long tube is the killer) an up-to-date copy of the map poster is £10.

So we're not promoting somewhere far away to go this month, but the opportunity to pass by Chester-le-Street or Eaglescliffe on your travels (by car, bus or train) and pick up a copy of the map to plan journeys for business or pleasure in the year ahead. If you don't want to put it on the wall, stick it inside a cupboard door. We guarantee to have a map ready for you throughout November, and if not we'll get one for you for free in time for Christmas.

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](http://www.nationalrail.com). For National Rail Enquiries call 24hr 08457 484950



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## NORTHUMBERLAND'S OLD MAN RUM BURSTS ONTO THE NATIONAL SCENE



**North East specialist rum blender Ian Linsley recently set up a new company to launch what is thought to be a world first.**

The international Rum Fest 2016 event in London, in October, was the stage for the launch of a distinctive and exclusive limited edition rum that has already caught the imagination of spirits connoisseurs and rum ambassadors.

Called Expressions, this exclusive rum has been created by specialist rum company, the Old Man Rum Co. The Northumberland based business is run by Ian Linsley who has a long history in the rum and drinks industry.

Expressions is the first product to be produced by Ian and his Old Man Rum Co. It

is an exclusive, limited edition run, with only 250 bottles available.

Retailing at £1,800 a bottle this is no ordinary rum. Expressions is a 100pc pure pot still rum, a unique blend combining seven rums aged from between 25 to 33 years old from distilleries based in the Caribbean. Three of the distilleries have since closed and stopped producing, so Expressions is not only unique in its blend but cannot be replicated again.

Ian said: "Expressions made an impressive debut at Rum Fest. Expert opinion was very positive. We got some direct sales and many strong leads, including interest from the Far East. We're confident there is a market for a premium rum product like Expressions."

## CITY TAVERN BAGS BEST PUB AWARD



Staff at one of North East's most popular pubs are celebrating after scooping another top accolade.

The team at City Tavern, Northumberland Road, are toasting their success after the venue was named Best Pub of the Year at the 2016 Tyne and Wear Lifestyle Awards.

The awards, a first of its kind in the North East, were hosted by television network Made in Tyne and Wear as a celebration of the best lifestyle

businesses across the county.

Following 40,000 votes, the shortlisted businesses were honoured at the event in front of over 230 guests, including local dignitaries and celebrities.

City Tavern is no stranger to award wins, having previously been voted the "Pub with the Best Pint" in the Star Pubs & Bars awards organised by Heineken, beating more than 1000 pubs from across the country to the title.

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## CHERRY TREE BLOSSOMS AGAIN

Popular high end Newcastle neighbourhood restaurant The Cherry Tree has invested in a refresh in the run up to Christmas 2016.

The last few months have seen the arrival of a new chef, a new kitchen team and new menus, along with a refinement of the logo and launch of a new website and marketing materials.

The changes at the stylish restaurant in Osborne Road, Jesmond, have been made in preparation for the busy festive season. Special menus have been created and bookings are already being taken, including for the six-course New Year's Eve party celebration.

Head Chef Farhad Rakani has identified and kept customer favourites on the menus while refining and adding some new dishes since he joined in June. Farhad's style is 'modern British' where he takes ideas from a range of culinary backgrounds and gives them his own twist. Like many good chefs, he places great emphasis on knowing his food suppliers and sourcing his produce regionally wherever possible.

## THE BROAD CHARE CELEBRATES CONTINUED NATIONAL RECOGNITION

Popular Newcastle public house The Broad Chare has retained its coveted Bib Gourmand in the latest Michelin Guide.

The Quayside pub, part of Terry Laybourne's 21 Hospitality Group, has successfully held onto the accolade since it first received it in 2012, within its first year of opening.

Bib Gourmands are awarded to dining establishments offering 'exceptional good food at moderate prices'.

The Broad Chare, featuring bar snacks, lighter bites and a Dish of the Day downstairs and a full dining room menu upstairs, is the only pub in the city to feature in the Great Britain and Ireland Michelin Guide 2017.

Manager, Steve Dunn, said: "Retaining the prestigious Bib Gourmand is a great achievement for us. The Broad Chare approach and offer is simple - we are first and foremost a pub focused on offering a great beer list and honest seasonal food."



## WYLAM BREWERY SECURES SUNDAY OPENING

A leisure venue which occupies one of Newcastle's most iconic buildings is extending its hours to include Sundays only four months after opening.

Wylam Brewery opened in the Palace of Arts, in Exhibition Park, in May, following extensive £2m restoration works. The venue, which is the new home for Wylam Brewery following its relocation from Heddon-on-the-Wall in Northumberland, houses a brewery, a 30-barrel brew house, tap

room with food offering and events space.

In the short time it has been open, the new Wylam Brewery has become one of the most talked-about leisure locations in the North East. Initially opening on Thursday and Friday evenings and Saturday from midday to 11pm, as well as for private hires throughout the week, the venue has now been granted a license for Sunday opening from midday to 11pm and has added Sunday lunches to its offering.



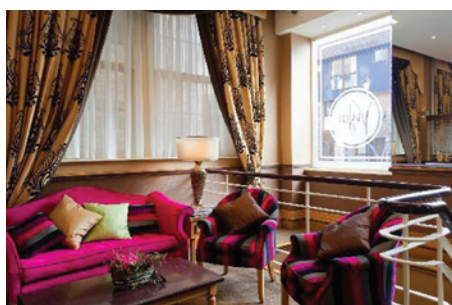
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## EXCITING TIMES AHEAD FOR VUJON

Northern Insight's Jack and Michael Grahamslaw nurse their insatiable appetites for Indian food by tasting some proposed new menu additions at Vujon Restaurant in Newcastle.

Tucked away in a quiet corner of the Quayside with the Tyne Bridge standing triumphantly in your eyeline, the first thing that strikes you about Vujon is location, location, location. This, coupled with a menu encompassing an exciting array of dishes from across the Punjab and beyond, makes it a real must try for any aspiring curry aficionado. Yes, the Vujon name has long been synonymous with only the finest Indian fayre and although it had been a little while since our previous visit, we were met by those same intoxicating aromas on arrival. The purpose of the outing was a "media tasting evening" arranged to provide feedback to a selection of new flavours – which all sounds rather glamorous but I can assure you this job's not all Cobra & skittles!

Whilst the Vujon team wish to retain their long-held status as a fine dining destination, they are also keen to expand their offering with the introduction of some new dishes each with a heavy focus on authentic Indian "Street Food" – a trendy concept proving ever popular here in the UK. Pleased to be drafted in as "Guinea Pigs" for the evening, we took up their offer of a palette-awakening beer and turned our attentions to the itinerary. To begin, we enjoyed a tantalising medley of Angari Tikka; which consisted of clay-oven cooked chicken marinated in yoghurt, chilli and garlic, Kathi Kebab; Lamb-

diced, spiced and rolled up in a buttery chapatti and Vegetable Pakora; fresh vegetables mixed with onions and deep fried in a golden gram flour batter. The street food influence was especially apparent as all starters could be considered "Grab & Go" Indian market stall favourites except reinterpreted nicely here on a plate with that trademark Vujon stamp of quality.

Before we tucked into our mains, we were first enlightened about the origins of some of the dishes by Head Chef Atin, who spoke with great intelligence and passion. His desire to bring as much authenticity as possible to Tyneside was hugely evident and we learnt that the Murgh Makhani (one of the potential new dishes) is a tomato and yoghurt based sauce cooked in a style reminiscent of that in New Delhi. The milder strength is more reflective of the homeland and actually proved an unlikely hit with Dad, who usually such a chilli fiend, rarely goes in for anything below a Madras heat. The tastebuds they are a-changin'.

The Railway Lamb Curry was another pleasant surprise. A hark back to the days of the British Raj, this classic Anglo-Indian dish was often served to the travelling aristocracy in railway carriages or station rooms and was actually favoured by the Brits because of its milder palate. How times have changed!

The real highlight however happened to be the Murgh Tawa Fry. Whilst the other two were more slow-cooked saucy affairs, this was a dish of a drier consistency and owing to the fresh onion and capsicum packed an immense depth of flavour. Expertly spiced by the man Atin, this was more of a spicy tongue-flutterer and was greeted with great approval around the room. I personally chose an excellent vegetable pelaw to accompany although I did steal a glance at the old man wrapping it up carefully in a sheet of Naan bread...a la street food! Get you Mr Mumbai!

All of this was followed by Kulfi and coffees which gave the Vujon team a chance to pick our brains about these prospective new options. "Outstanding" was the verdict. Innovative and expertly seasoned, I'm sure these courses will bring some further vibrancy to the menu and it was certainly a pleasure try them first.

Vujon has been a permanent fixture in Newcastle's culinary scene for 26 years now and although admittedly, there is an abundance of exciting new eateries sprouting up across our region, this old favourite must not be forgotten about. To paraphrase a review from our archives "Vujon is *still* the Rolls Royce of Curry Houses."

Further information can be found at [www.vujon.com](http://www.vujon.com)



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## PATHWAYS 4All's 6TH ANNUAL BALL

Guests were blown away as they entered The Marriott Gosforth on Saturday evening for what has to be one of the best charity balls in the region.

Pathways 4All's 6th annual ball raised a staggering £130,000 as the guests Rumbled in the Jungle. They were entertained by African Dancers, Elephants, Gorillas and Acropolis doing a jungle themed performance, before dancing the night away.

This local charity based within the Rising Sun Country Park where they run The Tim Lamb Children's Centre. The centre caters for children with additional needs and disabilities. The centre operates 7 days a week with a host of activities for both the children and their families.









# DON'T DRINK ANY OLD PORT IN A STORM!

With Christmas not too far away, now is the time that many start to plan for the various meals that will take place over the holiday period. One drink that is often on the list of festive treats is a bottle or two of Port; so let's have a quick look at Port, where is it from, how is it made and the different styles available.

Port is a "fortified" wine from the Douro Valley of northern Portugal. A fortified wine is one that has a proportion of its alcohol derived not from a natural fermentation but by the addition (fortification) of a strong, neutral spirit (think of it as a basic brandy).

Several different varieties of red grapes are used - Touriga Francesa, Touriga Nacional, & Tinta Roriz, are some of the main varieties but a total of some 30 or so are permitted. After picking, the grapes are taken to the winery and put in large, metre deep stone troughs called lagares. Traditionally the grapes are "trodden" by foot by teams of treaders that link arms and slowly move up and down the lagare gently crushing the grapes to release the juice (must) and colour from the grapes. Today, in many instances, the process has been mechanised but with the same end result, a highly pigmented must (unfermented grape juice) that is then allowed to ferment for a short while until about half the natural level of alcohol has been achieved. At this point the wine is drawn off from the lagare into barrels and at the same time a strong (75% vol), neutral spirit added in a ratio of about one part spirit to 4 parts wine. This fortification takes the

alcohol level to a point beyond which the natural yeast can no longer survive and so no further fermentation takes place. The resultant wine is high in alcohol (20% vol) but also sweet as it is still very high in natural grape sugars.

The young wine is left for several months during which time it is constantly assessed. Depending on the quality of the wine it will end up as one of several different port styles. There are two main port categories, Bottle Aged and Wood Aged.

**Bottle Aged Port** spends only a couple of years in barrel before being bottled and is usually considered to be the finest Port. Within this category Vintage Port represents the ultimate in Port. Made only in the finest of years these are immensely rich and powerful with a delicious chocolate flavour. With the ability (and often need) to age for several decades this style of Port has long been a favourite to "lay down" for future drinking. Because the development takes place predominantly in the bottle they need to be decanted prior to serving to remove the sediments that are part of the ageing process.

**Wood Aged Port** as the name suggests, spend most of their time in barrel. Usually filtered before

bottling these styles generally do not require decanting, they include:

## Ruby

Rich, full-bodied red Ports that are aged in wooden barrels for two or three years before bottling. Ripe and juicy they are designed for early drinking.

## Late Bottled Vintage

More serious than ruby and aged for 4 to 6 years to give the character of a vintage Port without having to wait so long.

## Tawny

Extended ageing in barrel results in a Port that is lighter in colour (hence the name) and in style with lovely toffee flavours. They can be 10, 20, 30 or even 40 years old. Delicious, elegant wines.

## Colheita

A tawny from a single year.

## White

A Port from white grapes that is aged for 2 – 3 years and can be dry as well as sweet.

Further information about the aforementioned wine can be found at [www.richardgrangerwines.co.uk](http://www.richardgrangerwines.co.uk) or instore at Richard Granger Fine Wine Merchants, West Jesmond Station, Lyndhurst Avenue, Newcastle Upon Tyne, NE2 3HH







## Sachins Christmas Tapas Menu

Poppadoms and Pickles

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## MEET THE GM

## MARGARET LIVINGSTONE-EVANS

ESHOTT HALL, ESHOTT, MORPETH

**Whilst growing up, did you always envisage yourself working in Hotels?**

Like a lot of young people I didn't know exactly what I wanted to do, however once I started working in hotels I was smitten, I caught the bug and have enjoyed working in them ever since, but anyone coming into the industry must be prepared to accept it as a way of life rather than a job because it can monopolise your life.

**What prompted your move to Eshott Hall?**

Who wouldn't want to it's such a beautiful hotel, having worked in Scotland for The RPC Collection, I jumped at the opportunity to remain within the company as well as being much closer to home as I live in Northumberland.

**What plans do you have in store for Eshott Hall?**

To tell the world about our beautiful hotel. In many ways Eshott Hall has remained a glorious secret nestled away in the hamlet of Eshott, a lot of our visitors say they came upon us by chance, I am passionate about making Eshott Hall visible to all.

**Can you summarize some of your greatest achievements to date?**

Apart from our children, Jonathan and Katie and maintaining a happy marriage for 32 years whilst both of us working in the hotel industry (my husband is also a hotel GM). There have been many achievements but all so different in many ways.

**Eshott Hall is a hotel widely renowned for its weddings. Is this something central to your thinking moving forward?**

Weddings are a huge part of our business as well as shooting parties, however as a hotel we are available to guests for accommodation, afternoon teas as well as dinner in our two rosette restaurant, Eshott Hall is a great place to spoil your loved one and is only 30 minutes from Newcastle.

**We imagine that working in hotels can be exciting and varied. Is it really true that each day offers something different?**

I cannot tell you how different each hour is, never mind each day, you can never predict what will happen from one minute to the next, which is what keeps it exciting.

**With various new hotels emerging recently in our region. Can you describe how you adapt to changing trends in the industry?**

The beauty of Eshott Hall is that we let everyone else adapt and change but we remain a constant classical, traditional hotel with the guests needs at the heart of what we do.

**Is there a mantra that you always aspire to do business by?**

Prior preparation prevents poor performance. Planning and organising in advance is crucial.

**What motivates you?**

Working with like minded people.

**How do you like to relax?**

Apart from the obvious holidays, we like as a family to visit 'Sonny at Rialto's in Ponteland, he is a superb host and always makes us welcome and valued as a customer as well as always providing great food.



Eshott Hall voted one of the 10 best wedding venues 2016 by **The Daily Telegraph**



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## BOUTIQUE BOWLING VENUE LAUNCHES BASEMENT GOLF ATTRACTION

Lane7, the popular central Newcastle boutique bowling spot, has opened its new mini golf course



Earlier this year, bosses at the ten-lane venue installed the region's first ten-seat 'Racing Rig' into the three-floor space and has now added a 9 hole course to its basement.

The indoor mini-course has been created Newcastle interior specialists, One Concept, who were commissioned by Lane7 to create nine bespoke mini golf holes, complete with graded artificial grass. The course also features its own mini Clubhouse.

It's not the first time Lane7 has offered golf at the venue after it hosted a 12-week mini golf pop-up in Summer 2014, which proved immensely popular. Lane7 operations manager, Charlie Snow, said: "We'll be giving mini golf in the basement the typical Lane7 treatment. We learned a lot from

the pop up the first time round and the course this time is even more fun, more user-friendly and more realistic to playing on real golf greens. Any groups with a competitive edge are going to love this.

"There was a lot of disappointed punters when we ended the golf the last time round. Its return is long overdue and we're pretty certain it'll be in big demand for the upcoming Christmas party season as well as for corporate entertainment and team building nights out."

The addition of mini golf brings the number of attractions within the three-floor space on St

James' Boulevard in central Newcastle up to seven. Bowling, pool, ping pong, karaoke, the Racing Rig and beer pong all now feature alongside its acclaimed American barbecue style restaurant and three dedicated bars.

Lane7 has won a huge number of fans keen to take advantage of its alternative night out and has built a growing reputation as an unconventional private corporate venue, with the likes of Sage, Atom Bank, Convergys and the Scottish Rugby Union having hired out the whole venue for private events.



# WE'LL RETURN TO "ZENDER"

BY JACKIE MARSTON



We visited Zen in Durham following recommendations and I was glad we did. We were seated next to the bar, which I was told was table 12. This is a good table as you literally just look up and there is the bar staff eager to serve you. We were waited on by Begonia and Sophie, who I have to say are a credit to the place. Lovely, smiley, efficient and extremely welcoming. Food wise, the choice is a mixture of Asian, however favouring on the side of Thai.

I chose the king prawns as a starter garlic king prawns in garlic butter, chopped red chilli, shredded kaffir lime and Thai basil, warm roti bread fabulous for mopping up the delicious sauce. The flavours were amazing and there was so much of it, that I actually didn't order a main course. My appetite is small, but this was way too good to leave. Hubby ordered Zen deli board which is a four in one of their most popular Thaipas panko fishcake, quacking duck rollies, Bangkok toasties and satay chicken. This looked divine and he tells me that the spices and

flavours all complemented each other really well.

His main course their Asian meat feast which consisted of char sui, crispy belly pork, roast duck with crispy skin, flavoursome belly pork and honey glazed red cooked pork – this was recommended by Sophie and it didn't disappoint. This dish is perfect for anyone that enjoys the meat sweats! Good sized portion, served with rice and hubby said it was great.

Apart from two flirty Thai girls at the bar, this place is perfect for any party or just for a bite to eat. They were just a little distracting, with all the hair flicking and posing, but each to their own! Having just come back from Thailand this place is a real find. Atmosphere is great, the food is very authentic, service is excellent, but the best part about this place is the staff, as they make you so welcome. In the words of Arnie – I'll be back!

[www.zendurham.co.uk](http://www.zendurham.co.uk)

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Clapshot

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## FOOD GLORIOUS FOOD

BY GORDON TAYLOR

The enjoyment of a meal is often enhanced by the surroundings in which the food is served. At Dobson's Restaurant in Linden Hall Hotel in Longhorsley, those surroundings can't be faulted.

Dobson's dining room is sumptuous in décor, tastefully appointed in order to make the diner feel supremely comfortable. Tables are set so individual parties of diners don't feel restricted by adjacent parties and allows for conversation to be undertaken in privy manner.

My wife, daughter and I made the trip along the A697 in glorious Northumberland scenery until turning off onto a wonderful tree lined avenue where it wasn't too much of a stretch to imagine you were in a 19th century horse drawn carriage dressed in finery, ready for an exclusive ball at the imposing hall.

Glen Snate, Food and Beverage Manager at Linden Hall met us on arrival. A native of Monaco, Glen quickly made us feel at home in the lounge area, treating us to drinks and leaving us to peruse the menu for as long as was necessary. The lounge itself contains information regarding the original owners of Linden Hall, the Bigge family, which is both interesting and informative. A real crackling fire sputtered in the grate, something you don't see too often these days.

So to the restaurant, beginning of an outstanding culinary experience which won't easily be forgotten.

We were attended to by the Assistant Restaurant Manager, Claudiu Papp a Romanian who has spent much time in England and is extremely courteous, as was Tibor our waiter for the evening.

My starter consisted of Duck served with foie gras, chocolate, cherry and gingerbread, a blend of flavours which worked wonderfully well. It's this type of innovative menu item which makes Dobson's such an evident hit with diners.

While my daughter decided on no starter, my wife chose Rosary Goats Cheese with figs, Pine Nut and Black Olives. The goats cheese had just the right creamy consistency, a clean taste and was incredibly fluffy and light, the figs, pine nut and olives setting it off to perfection,

My main of 21 day old rib eye, alliums, chard, and boulangerie was nothing short of outstanding. Much thought has gone into the accompaniments to the meals in this restaurant. My preference for medium to well done ensured I was happy and the consistency and slight resistance in the mouth was just right.

Lynda's vegetarian option of Crushed Potato Cakes, Tapioca, Chick Pea, Apricot Tomaton left her drooling. The potato Cakes had a crisp exterior and

when applied to the fork with the other ingredients caused a wonderful taste sensation in the mouth.

Lesley's Free Range Chicken with Bacon, Sweetcorn and Leek was the epitome of a traditional British meal. Normally someone who dislikes sweetcorn, her enthusiasm for it on this occasion was a revelation. Free range meat has that distinctive taste which characterises fowl, particularly.

Dessert for Lynda was Baked Pumpkin Cheesecake, Bacon, Maple, Pecan, while Lesley and I chose the Apple Tatin for two with vanilla, blackberry, served with crème glaze and ice cream.

Lynda reported the cheesecake to be highly unusual with a tang that worked, the subtle ingredients combining to create something rich and highly rewarding.

Our Apple Tatin, served on a large plate, where you could serve yourself with as much or as little depending on your taste had large apple slices on a bed of puff pastry, a rich creamy glaze or ice cream to taste. None of it survived, which I think says it all about this dish.

All in all, one of the best dining experiences we've ever had.

Linden Hall Golf & Country Club, Northumberland, Longhorsley, Morpeth NE65 8XF. Tel 0344 879 9084  
[www.macdonaldhotels.co.uk/our-hotels/macdonald-linden-hall-golf-country-club/](http://www.macdonaldhotels.co.uk/our-hotels/macdonald-linden-hall-golf-country-club/)





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# A MEMORABLE MID-WEEK RETREAT

BY MICHAEL GRAHAMSLAW



4 Star Slaley Hall Hotel, now under the flagship of The Q Hotels group casts a sprawling influence over 1000 acres of Northumberland countryside and has long been the ultimate place for a destination break



Encircled by undulating fairways and encroaching woodland, Slaley Hall certainly exudes a charming "out in the sticks" vibe and as myself and Lisa negotiated our way along their long and winding driveway, we knew we were in for an evening of splendour and serenity. The building itself is a stately Edwardian mansion and inside is impeccably furnished from the chocolate-hued walls down to the plush velvet upholstery. And, although it had been a little while since my last visit, Slaley still retains all of that "WOW" factor upon arrival.

Despite lending itself nicely as a haven for rest and relaxation, there's actually an enormous amount of fun to be had onsite. Slaley Hall is home to two outstanding golf courses; The Priestman and the trickier Hunting course, an outdoor pursuits centre, leisure club and even a very quaint whiskey snug. I certainly know where I fancied heading, although having not managed to acquire the necessary "golf course pass" from Lisa, we ditched the bags in our spacious double room and headed for the spa instead. A most welcome alternative.

The health club facilities at Slaley Hall are also highly extensive and come complete with 20m heated leisure pool, steam room and sauna. Everything you need then to expunge some of the stresses and strains of modern living. Prior to

having a dip, Lisa snuck off for a 30 minute facial whilst I, believe it or not, decided to work up a sweat in the...GYM! I believe there was a few reported sightings of a pig flying over the Priestman course that day! Oh deary me.

After blowing away a few cobwebs in the leisure club then, we returned to our rooms with a radiant glow, and changed for dinner before heading down for a quick snifter in the lively "19th Bar." Slaley Hall has a longstanding association with great food, I was even lucky enough to witness the great Albert Roux cooking up a storm in what is now the Duke's Grill many years ago – and this sense of quality is still evident in the food today. With three restaurants to choose from, each with their own merits, we were certainly spoilt for the choice. And, for those staying for an extended period, it makes for an exciting time being able to test drive the lot!

The Claret Jug, a sleek sports bar with a sumptuous bar menu was an option, as was the aforementioned Duke's Grill, a fine dining restaurant revered for serving up only the most exquisite of dishes, we did however both agree on Hadrian's, a stylish brasserie which delivers classic British fayre with a modern twist and champions local produce in the process. Now that's what I'm talking about!

The new seasonal Autumn/Winter menu saw us

salivating and it was therefore with characteristic fervour that we waded into East Coast "Crab Brulee" dressed adroitly in a tangy tomato salsa and accompanied by a toasted ciabatta croute, as well as Smoked Salmon marinated in maple syrup and whisky and served with pickled onions. The salmon-based starter has been a staple of my eating-out diet for many moons now and this quirky reworking was certainly something worth sampling. Hats off!

There was a symphony of flavours to be found in our main courses too as we enjoyed Roast breast of chicken with a celeriac fondant in a lemon tarragon jus and Pan seared breast of pheasant with bubble & squeak, blackberries and kale which we all washed down with an excellent bottle of Carbernet Sauvignon.

Eager not to negate my earlier efforts in the gym, we eschewed dessert (cue more pig flying) and instead retired to our rooms for a restful nights sleep. We awoke the following morning fully energised and ready to return to the muck and bullets of the media world, although not before gobbling up a quick continental breakfast (full english also available) overlooking the Hunting Course. As we made our departures, Lisa and I agreed on one thing, "Slaley has still got it!"





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Winifred Kotalawela had gastric bypass surgery performed at Spire Washington Hospital and now has a new lease of life.

"I decided to go for weight loss surgery because I was tired of being unhealthy. Being overweight made me feel so lethargic and I felt I had no energy to do anything, so with having no energy I didn't go out, I didn't socialise, which then led to me having no confidence. After speaking to one of the Customer Service Advisers at Spire Washington Hospital, I attended one of their Weight Loss Support Groups. I spoke to a few patients who previously had weight loss surgery and from speaking to them and listening to their own personal stories, I booked in there and then.

"I was extremely nervous ahead of surgery, this was a big operation! But from start to finish the staff were incredibly friendly and very efficient. I felt at all times I was a person and not just a number. The day after surgery I was up and walking around and it was a lovely day, so I sat in their courtyard, watched the wildlife and enjoyed a bit of sun.

"Having the gastric bypass surgery has given me a new outlook on life, I am no longer just sitting around anymore, I go out and socialise, I enjoy long walks (which I couldn't do before) and I have

noticed my confidence has grown tremendously. I am now travelling and enjoying every minute of it!

"The surgery even gave me the confidence to travel to Australia to visit my grandchildren, I was not only able to get on the floor to play with them but I had the energy and confidence to climb the Sydney Harbour Bridge. Before the surgery I wouldn't have even dreamed of doing this! This surgery was life changing and I wish I got it done years ago."

For more information about how Spire Washington Hospital can help you, contact one of our friendly Customer Service Advisers on 0191 418 8687 or email [info@spirewashington.com](mailto:info@spirewashington.com)





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# We'd love to help

## Your health is our number one priority

Looking after number one is important to us all, but with work, family and general life commitments, sometimes the best of intentions to eat well and exercise go out the window – we've all been there and getting the perfect balance is never easy!

There are also times when through no fault of your own, ill health can catch up with you and that's when knowing where to turn for the right type of treatment becomes especially important. After all, the choice you make has an impact on your future well-being so being informed is absolutely key.

Spire Washington Hospital, for those who might not have heard of us before, is a part of Spire Healthcare, the country's second largest private hospital group. Our hospital is based in Rickleton, just off the A1(M) with free parking.

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Situated in a quiet residential area, the hospital has extensive grounds which create a relaxing atmosphere for both patients and visitors alike. We are within easy reach of the A1(M), close to Durham, Newcastle and Sunderland.

Here at Spire Washington Hospital we have 35 in-patient beds. There is a highly trained team of nurses and a resident medical doctor on site 24 hours a day so you know you are in safe hands. You will see your chosen consultant at every stage of the process, pre and post-surgery. We frequently offer free open evenings for patients thinking about cosmetic and weight loss surgery, at venues around the North East and also at the hospital. To find out more visit our website [www.spirewashington.com](http://www.spirewashington.com).

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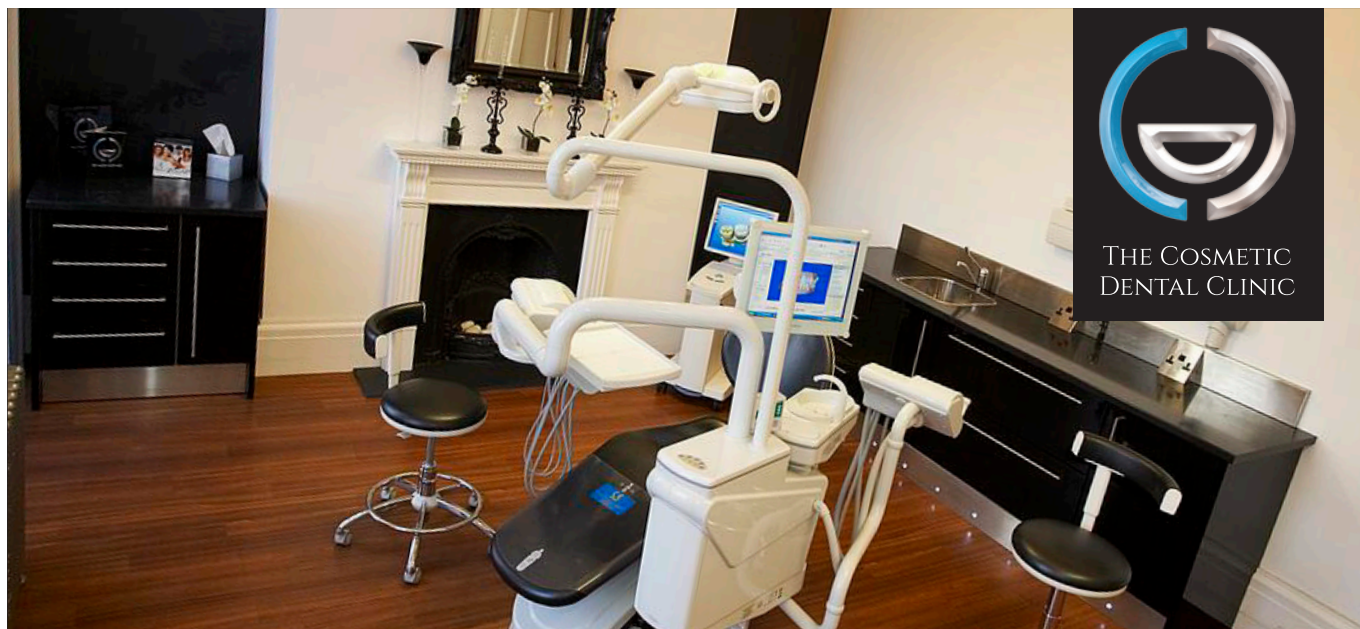


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## NEWCASTLE LEGENDS VS. MANCHESTER SELECT IN AID OF THE ALAN SHEARER FOUNDATION

A Newcastle Legends side managed by Alan Shearer and Les Ferdinand took on Keith Gillespie's Manchester Select at Kingston Park, home of the Newcastle Falcons, on the afternoon of Sunday October 9.

On the field Newcastle took a first half lead through Alan Shearer, who played the entire opening 45 minutes; after the interval Keith Gillespie levelled past Milan Srnicek. Jamie McClen restored Newcastle's lead following a Peter Beardsley shot that rebounded off the post before actor Ralf Little ensured the spoils were shared in a cracking game of football.

The victors though were the Alan Shearer Foundation for, once the totals had been mustered, it was announced that an impressive £50,000 had been raised.

With Sir John Hall, Malcom Dix and The Magpie Group as special guests, Singe Vert Photography (Andy Thompson) and Media Arts (Neil Jackson) were there, behind the scenes, covering it all for Newcastle Legends and the Foundation.

After the game Newcastle Legends manager, Alan Shearer, said: "The game was played in high spirits and in front of a great crowd which is just superb for the Foundation.

"Harps did really well and can still do a fantastic job as he proved and it was just right that we got Milan (Srnicek) involved, it was good for him and he got a fantastic reception.

"As for me, I didn't think I'd last that long but it was good fun and it was a great finish from me as well."

The game though was all about the Entertainers, and raising money for the Alan Shearer

Foundation and Shearer added his thanks, not only to the fans, but to the lads for travelling.

He said: "I'd also like to thank everyone for turning up, including Tino, who's come from Colombia, and Les, who's travelled up from London, lads have come from everywhere but I'd like to thank everyone for getting involved."

Newcastle Legends Managing Director and event organiser Steve Wraith added: "The idea came about after the last game in 2011 (against Liverpool) that we should look at doing another one.

"It's actually took that long to get people onside and be able to do it for which the support from the Newcastle Falcons, and from Lesley Fulton (Alan Shearer Foundation) has been amazing. Now that it's all done we've managed to raise a fantastic amount for a great cause and I'm really pleased. I feel immense pride to have been involved in raising that much for charity which we know will stay in the region.

"I've been to the Alan Shearer Centre on a number of occasions and have seen first-hand the fantastic work they continue to do and that is a truly amazing job with, and by, some inspirational people.

"I'd like to thank everyone at Kingston Park, Lesley Fulton, Della Hadlingham and all the players and celebrities for taking time out of their busy lives to make this the success that it was; also the sponsors of Rich Energy and

Utility Wise, and Nike for the shirts – we did great, thank you."

### THE ALAN SHEARER FOUNDATION

The Alan Shearer Centre is a highly specialist, respite, residential and social facility for people with complex disabilities and acute sensory impairments. Situated on the outskirts of Newcastle the establishment comprises three specialist facilities on the same site: a short break provision, offering respite care tailored specifically to the needs of our disabled guests, a new specialist residential home for disabled adults with multiple needs, and an activity centre, open daily to disabled children and adults offering a wide range of therapeutic and sensory activities – [www.alanshearerfoundation.org.uk](http://www.alanshearerfoundation.org.uk) & [www.alanshearercentre.org.uk/index.php](http://www.alanshearercentre.org.uk/index.php) – follow on Twitter at @AlanShearerFndn

### NEWCASTLE LEGENDS

Newcastle Legends was set up in 2015 to help fans get closer to their heroes. We have a great track record for putting on after dinner events with former legends who have worn the famous black and white stripes.

Whether you're wanting to book a former player for an after dinner speaking event, perform a presentation or want to know if they are willing to pull on the boots again for a good cause then get in touch with us today and we will do the rest for you.

With events now being put on in conjunction with Sodexo and St James Park the Newcastle Legends will bring you an exclusive 'Evening with Alan Shearer' on November 18 at the Nine Bar. Further information on this, and other Legends events can be found via [www.newcastlelegends.com](http://www.newcastlelegends.com) or calling 0191 2299632.







# THE MOON IS FLYING HIGH

BY GORDON TAYLOR

James Moon is an entrepreneur anyone would love to emulate. At the tender age of 22, he is regarded as a major player in the field of aircraft brokerage.



James left school at sixteen and immediately proceeded to gain his pilots licence at 17 following a serious accident in which he broke his back. At that stage, one of the aircraft owners asked James if he could have a try at selling his aircraft worth around £100,000.

"I managed to do that for him and saw the enormous potential there could be in selling aircraft both large and small, so I launched my company 'Moon Jet Group' and only had a couple of aircraft in the first year," James advises, "I thought that wasn't too impressive."

At that stage James felt the company was a failure but at Christmas the company grew rapidly to have 78 aircraft right from single engine aeroplanes up to the largest one on the books at the moment, an Airbus A330 – 300 priced at £86,000,000.

A pupil of Dame Allen's school in the city, James originates from Sussex but is settled here and will be for the foreseeable future.

Like many other industries, Moon Jet Group both actively work globally to seek out aircraft and also are sought out for their expertise by international clients in the aviation business. It's not unusual for James to be holding conference calls through the night.



Without going into detail, Moon Jet Group is the final company in the bidding process to provide 22 Boeing 777 aircraft to a major international airline and they are currently handling due diligence for that deal.

Growth is very important for the entrepreneur, "I am in the process of getting into aircraft charters, seeking authorisation from the CAA and FAA and also CASA in Australia. It means aircraft we don't sell, we can reallocate as charter aeroplanes, giving us another string to the bow, allowing older aircraft to have a useful life," says James.

Trans Asia, Taiwan's major airline and Virgin represent recent companies Moon Jet Group has dealt with. However much of the current negotiating positions with companies is difficult to talk about as negotiations are in a delicate state of play.

As in any business, price is a key factor and owners often are unrealistic in expectation for a number of reasons. It's natural to want to recoup the outlay on an aircraft but 4 engine aeroplanes for instance are out of fashion because of fuel efficiency considerations. James is particularly keen to be honest with owners and informs them immediately what they can expect to realise from their aircraft. He feels there is a niche for honesty in the aviation world and adheres to his principles when dealing with his clients.

As a funny aside to the business process, James recounts an incident when he was in Los Angeles in 2015. He was introduced to a billionaire and in the process of sitting down tumbled on the floor as he didn't realise it was a revolving seat, so even high powered talks can start with a humorous onset.

There we have it. A young man with an inordinate amount of drive and work ethic, making the most of a fortunate request early in his life.





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