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Welcome,

to the Sept/Oct edition of **In&Around North Durham** magazine...

Spooky season is upon us and with it comes the lovely colours of Autumn, open fires, baggy jumpers and hot chocolate sitting by the window watching the rain

We have some brilliant advertisers in this edition, along with competitions, a heart warming recipe for those cold nights and a review of the long awaited Practical Magic 2

If you'd like to be in the next edition which will be our Nov/Dec Winter edition, please get in touch

Until next time

Val x



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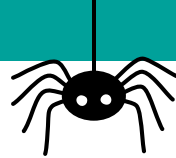
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COMPETITIONS
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A new community landmark created by artist Graeme Hopper has been unveiled at the entrance to Lombard Drive in North Lodge, Chester-le-Street (Image: Ian Gibson.)

New Artwork Celebrates North Lodge Community

A new community landmark has been unveiled in North Lodge, Chester-le-Street, creating a focal point for remembrance while celebrating the identity and community spirit of the area.

The artwork, created by local artist Graeme Hopper, has been installed at the entrance to Lombard Drive and will provide a central gathering point for future community events and remembrance services.

Craig Martin, chair of North Lodge Parish Council, said the artwork would help strengthen the area's sense of identity and bring residents together.

"Shared landmarks bring people together and will make our area an even better place to live than it already is," he said, while thanking everyone who had helped bring the project to life over the past eight years.

The project was delivered by North Lodge Parish Council in partnership with the North Lodge Remembrance Group.

Chris Veitch, chair of the North Lodge Remembrance Group, said he was "honoured" to see the finished artwork following the eight-year campaign.

He added that the new landmark would give residents a place to come together and pay their respects during the Remembrance period each November.

The artwork was officially unveiled at a ceremony on Saturday, August 1.

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lead to more happy customers is true and we work hard to make that happen for every installation we carry out! So, if you want to make use of your loft space, however big or

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Our daughters, Hannah and Lily, have been an incredible support, helping us prepare for opening and continuing to help since. Despite being only 12, they are fantastic with everyone they meet and are very much part of Team Halo.

We can't wait to welcome you all!

Love,
Lara & Vicky, Hannah & Lily
Team Halo





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Tired Paws Mission Overview

Tired Paws is a UK charitable foundation dedicated to caring for retired ex-Prison Service dogs.

What we do:

- **Support retired working dogs:**
Focuses on ex prison service dogs who worked as sniffer dogs, riot dogs, or perimeter guards
- **Cover veterinary care:**
Once retired, these dogs are no longer prison property and can't get medical insurance. Tired Paws helps fund the vet care they desperately need

Ensure comfortable retirement:

The goal is to give these dogs comfort, care, and love in their "golden years" after years of service

Why it exists:

Many of these dogs are bred and specially trained, but get retired early or on medical grounds. Unlike their handlers, they don't get a retirement fund, so Tired Paws steps in to fill that gap.

In short:

Tired Paws makes sure loyal prison service dogs get medical support and a peaceful retirement after serving.



Our retired prison dogs have no pension. Your help can provide the treatment they so desperately need to give them a pain free future

To see our retired dogs and read their stories please visit

WWW.TIREDDPAWS.CO.UK

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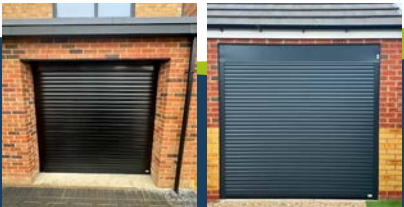
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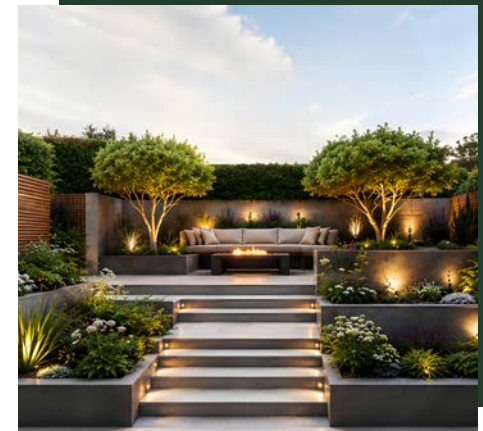


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Meet the Founders of The Detective Rooms

The Detective Rooms was created by Jen Jarvie and Howard Little, combining decades of real investigative experience to create one of the UK's most authentic immersive crime-solving experiences.

Jen Jarvie is an award-winning private investigator, lecturer in professional policing, and nationally recognised cold case specialist. Having spent over 13 years investigating complex cases, training investigators and appearing across television, radio and podcasts, she has built a reputation for uncovering the truth where others have reached dead ends.

Alongside her is Howard Little, a former forensic photographer and expert witness whose career has centred on documenting crime scenes and presenting forensic evidence to the highest professional standards. His meticulous eye for detail and extensive courtroom experience bring an unrivalled level of authenticity to every investigation.

Together, Jen and Howard have transformed their combined expertise into an experience unlike any traditional escape room. Every case at The Detective Rooms has been inspired by genuine investigative methods, challenging visitors to analyse evidence, assess witness accounts, interpret forensic findings and work together to solve complex crimes.

Their shared vision is simple: to create immersive investigations that are intelligent, engaging and unforgettable—where every guest experiences what it truly feels like to think like a detective.

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New Businesses, Stronger Communities

"In my last article, I mentioned asking the Prime Minister to join me in celebrating new businesses in Chester-le-Street. I am delighted that we can now celebrate even more new businesses across North Durham.

The first, Pretty Little Pieces & More in Annfield Plain, is a treasure trove of items from more than 30 local artists and craftspeople, all under one roof. I went along to meet owner Vicky and her daughters, Keeley and Kira, to wish them well with their new venture.

Lanchester has also welcomed a brand-new café, Pip, which sits in the heart of the village and serves breakfast, lunch, homemade cakes and more. I look forward to visiting.

Since my last update, I have held advice surgeries in Annfield Plain and Sacriston. Advice surgeries are a brilliant way to meet constituents who need help or support or who want to sit down to discuss any issues or concerns with me. The issues brought to these surgeries can range from positive to harrowing, but whatever the issue, I am always here to help. My next advice surgery will be held in Lanchester in September.

I have also been out and about visiting local organisations, and there have been some incredible highlights. I was invited to attend the North Durham Joint Cadet Forces and STEM Community Showcase at North Durham Academy. The event brought the community together to inspire young people by highlighting pathways that develop confidence, leadership, teamwork and technical skills, while helping to prepare them for future education, apprenticeships and careers in engineering, science and technology.

I also met with 1507 Squadron, Royal Air Force Cadets, to learn more about their work and summer plans. I was honoured to be invited to unveil the new miners' memorial at Stanley Park Care Home.

The Pride in Place Neighbourhood Board met at the end of July, and I am pleased that the funding eligibility boundary has been formally extended to include South Moor. I continue to attend meetings regarding the breast cancer scandal and am supporting individual constituents affected by it. I also recently attended Bullion Hall's AGM, which plays a key role in Chester-le-Street.

Since the election, I have responded to 14,649 questions and enquiries. I have helped return over £892,522 owed to constituents in taxes/benefits/utilities. My biggest priority is to serve individuals and communities across North Durham. I will always make time for constituents and want to help in any way that I can. If you need help or support, please email me on luke.akehurst.mp@parliament.uk or call my office on 0191 371 8834."



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Join Dame Bella Batty (Bella Bluebell) this year as she is working constantly in her 'Bella Batty Boutique Salon' right in the heart of Saltwell Forest, alongside her son Little John (Jack Lee) who is ready to cause absolute mayhem!

While Robin Hood (Chris McCreery) robs from the rich to give to the poor, he's also trying to win the heart of his true love Maid Marion (Charlotte Chalkey). But watch out behind you! The wicked Sherriff of Saltwell (Alistair Justin Ward) is doing everything he can to defeat Robin and his Merry Men!

Don't panic because every great story needs a bit of magic luck, and The Saltwell Sprite (Tia Lamley) will do everything she can to help Robin win the day! With the help of Friar Tuck (Melissa Cavanagh) and Alan 'A' Dale (Patrick Harfield), things can only go right for the team!

Packed with laughs, music, and panto magic! come along and see the adventures of Robin Hood this Christmas at the Little Theatre Gateshead.



Written by
Philip Meeks

Performances

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Fri 11th.....	10am, 1pm, 7pm
Sat 12th.....	2pm, 7pm
Sun 13th.....	11am, 3pm, 7.30pm*
Tues 15th.....	10am, 1pm, 7pm
Wed 16th.....	10am, 1pm, 7pm
Thurs 17th.....	10am, 1pm, 7pm
Fri 18th.....	7pm
Sat 19th.....	10am, 2pm, 7.30pm*
Sun 20th.....	11am, 3pm, 7.30pm*
Tues 22nd.....	2pm, 7pm
Wed 23rd.....	2pm, 7pm
Thurs 24th.....	10am, 1.30pm, 4.30pm
Sun 27th.....	11am, 3pm
Mon 28th.....	7pm
Tues 29th.....	2pm, 7pm
Wed 30th.....	2pm, 7pm
Thurs 31st.....	1pm

*ADULT Panto

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From Foster Carer to Forever Mum

For Bridget, the secret to being a foster carer is never losing the sense of fun and wonder of being a child.

A retired nurse and grandmother, Bridget began fostering in 2009 after a colleague suggested it might suit her caring nature. What she discovered was a second vocation that would change her life forever.

Over the years, Bridget has welcomed children into her home, creating a sense of family, stability and belonging. Whether turning a walk in the woods into a Harry Potter adventure or helping a child learn to ride a bike, she believes trust is built through time spent together.

"I absolutely love it. The children I've had have been awesome and seeing the changes in them has been so rewarding. In fact, rewarding doesn't begin to describe the feeling when you witness those special moments."

One of those children was Corey, who arrived aged 10 feeling nervous and unsure. Today, at 24, he still calls Bridget Mum.

Reflecting on his time with her, Corey says:

"She got me out of my shell and talking to people, she is the reason why I'm the person I am. I have the most fantastic memories of the most everyday things. We would go on walks where she would encourage my imagination to go absolutely wild. Most importantly, I was included in everything."

Bridget knows fostering takes patience, commitment and support, but she believes the rewards are immeasurable.

"Having a child to look after opens the eyes and adds to your life, they don't take away from it."

For anyone wondering if they could foster, Bridget's message is:

"There is a young person out there right now waiting for you to open your heart to them."

Corey found a place to belong. Could you help another child do the same?



GIVE A CHILD A PLACE TO CALL HOME

“

Having a child to look after opens the eyes and adds to your life, they don't take away from it.

Bridget, Foster Carer

Fostering isn't always easy. It takes patience, commitment and support. But few things are more rewarding than helping a child feel safe, valued and part of a family.

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Emily & Sarah

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working on the In&Around
magazine (2006-2026) and I've loved
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Connect with nature by observing the local wildlife, including the Heron who enjoys standing by the far left hand side of the lake. You may also see some of our other regular visitors, including Spotted Woodpeckers, Kingfishers, wild ducks, Moorhens, Red Kites and Buzzards in the sky.

Our latest attraction is Charlotte the Alpaca, we have 2 new boys Corvus and Verio, 2 black swans we think are nesting on the island in the middle of the lake.

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Wainwright's Walk



St Bees beach



School

St Bees in Cumbria

After a day riding buses in the Lake District, I arrived in Whitehaven and stayed in its southern suburb of Corkickle. There's a railway tunnel between Whitehaven and Corkickle which is presently closed owing to the discovery of old mine workings which pre-date the railway line. As a result the long Cumbrian Coast line is severed and a short bus replacement covers the two stations. Long grass is growing over the track at Corkickle and not much evidence of work going on, so I think the five minute coach transfer might be the order for some time. One stop south of Corkickle is St Bees, where the land juts out into the Irish Sea, the most westerly part of northern England. It's a small village but there are maps posted widely available by local mapmaker Tony Pennick. Take a photograph of one of these and you'll be set for the day. You can walk the coastal paths, and St Bees is the stand/end point of Alfred Wainwright's Coast to Coast walk to Robin Hood's Bay, passing through three National Parks: the Lake District, Yorkshire Dales and the North York Moors.

The name has nothing to do with Bees. The village is named after the legend of St. Bega, daughter of an Irish king, living sometime between 600 and 900 AD. She refused to marry the man of her father's choice and fled in a small boat. Washed up here, she lived the life of a hermit, caring for local people.

When she moved on to an unknown destination, she left behind her arm-ring.

Although it is not even certain that Bega existed, the village is named after her, first as Kirkby Becoc, later St. Bees. The monks of the Priory, founded here after 1120, were custodians of the bracelet or arm-ring, believed to be her relic and they told the story. The ring remained here until 1539 when the Priory was dissolved by Henry VIII.

After 1539, a garbled version of the legend became current including this story. When Bega landed, she wanted to found a nunnery. She approached the Lord of Egremont, who laughingly promised her as much land as the snow would cover the next day. It was June and the next day was Midsummer Day. But it showed!

The church is now known as the Priory Church of St Mary and St Bega, which in Covid years celebrated its 900th anniversary. Opposite is the small public school which is not open to visitors. Whilst the inland village is nothing special, walk down to the beach to find a sandy stretch with a pleasant Beach Café, and the inviting Seacote Hotel. I didn't stay there, but it was built by Lord Lonsdale after the arrival of the railway in 1849 made St. Bees a popular tourist destination. Subsequent and current owners have altered the building but the original public bar entrance remains the same.

- Situated at the edge of the village the road to the hotel ends at the sea, giving that perfect feeling of having come to the edge of everything

The rail journey back to the north east is over the Tyne Valley Line from Carlisle to Newcastle, starting at St Bees and using the bus connection between Corkickle and Whitehaven. The line hugs the coast for much of the way to Carlisle and is very scenic. If you haven't got a railcard, use the new Northern Explorer ticket which is valid on Northern trains only for £35 one-day adult and £18 one-day child. Other cheap tickets with railcard discounts are available – just visit nationalrail.com.



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Image: Ramsdens

North East firm bought in £206m deal after humble high street beginnings

A North East business that started in a single Stockton shop almost 40 years ago has been acquired by a US firm in a deal worth more than £206 million.

Ramsdens, which first opened on the high street in May 1987, has grown into a nationwide pawnbroking and financial services business with 175 stores across the UK, including more than 25 across the North East. As well as pawnbroking, the company offers jewellery retail, precious metals services and travel money, and recently upgraded its profit expectations following the surge in gold prices.

The Stockton-headquartered company announced it has agreed to be acquired by Chess Bidco Ltd, a subsidiary of Texas-based FirstCash Holdings. Under the terms of the deal, Ramsdens shareholders will receive up to £6.09 per share in cash.

The acquisition marks another major milestone for the business, which has expanded significantly since joining the AIM stock market in 2017. Over the past nine years it has opened 50 additional stores, created more than 300 jobs and continued to grow profits.

Chief executive Peter Kenyon said he was “exceptionally proud” of the company’s transformation since its flotation, highlighting its expansion, job creation and strong financial performance. He added that he remains confident there are significant opportunities for future growth and believes FirstCash is well placed to support the next stage of Ramsdens’ development.

Non-executive chairman Simon Herrick said Ramsdens had delivered consistently strong results thanks to its diversified business model and management team. He said the cash offer represented a 35% premium to the company’s share price and was recommended by the board after taking independent financial advice.

FirstCash, which operates more than 3,300 locations across the United States, Latin America and the UK, said Ramsdens was an excellent strategic fit. Chief executive Rick Wessel said the company had a proven track record and that the acquisition supports FirstCash’s long-term growth strategy while creating value for customers, employees and shareholders alike.



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With the recent demand for leisure products in the UK and the need to have multi-purpose camper window vans that can be used as every day vehicles and for leisure trips, the PopTop Leisure Company presents a choice of new and used campervans for sale which are competitively priced to suit most people’s pockets. All our campervans are available to view at our North East showroom based in Birtley, County Durham.

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PRACTICAL MAGIC 2



In&Around Score 3/5

the film went on to become a much-loved cult favourite.

The sequel will continue the story of the Owens family curse – something Gillian jokes in the trailer probably isn't ideal for a Tinder profile.

Director Susanne Bier, who previously worked with Bullock on Bird Box, has hinted at a darker, moodier feel for the sequel. However, the trailer's use of Harry Nilsson's Coconut appears to nod to one of the original film's most memorable moments: the sisters' famous kitchen dance.

And yes, the margaritas are returning too. Kidman confirmed their comeback during an appearance on The Tonight Show, while Bullock added to the excitement by making her Instagram debut with a playful video featuring a magically appearing margarita.

The return of Practical Magic comes amid renewed interest in much-loved 1990s franchises, following the cancellation of a planned Buffy the Vampire Slayer revival and anticipation surrounding the upcoming Harry Potter HBO series.

Practical Magic 2 is scheduled to arrive in cinemas on 18 September.

Tony Yip

Graphic Designer



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The midnight margaritas are back, with Sandra Bullock and Nicole Kidman returning as sisters Sally and Gillian Owens in the long-awaited sequel to Practical Magic.

The first official teaser for Practical Magic 2 has already sparked huge interest, landing in Google Trends' top 10 within 24 hours of its release and attracting millions of views.

Bullock and Kidman reprise their roles from the 1998 cult classic, with Kidman previously sharing a behind-the-scenes video of the pair on set alongside the caption: "The witches are back."

The next generation of the Owens family will also take centre stage. The Kissing Booth star Joey King and Game of Thrones' Maisie Williams play Sally's grown-up daughters, Kylie and Antonia.

Lee Pace, best known for playing the elf Thranduil in The Hobbit trilogy, has also joined the cast as scholar Harlan Vex.

Based on Alice Hoffman's bestselling 1995 novel, the original Practical Magic followed the supernatural Owens sisters as they returned to their family home in Massachusetts. Combining romance, comedy and darker supernatural themes,

COMPETITION CORNER

Simply complete one of the puzzles on this page and fill in the entry form below for a chance to win family tickets courtesy of **Vue Gateshead**.



NAME THE FILM THIS FAMOUS LINE BELONGS TO...

1. "Here's Johnny!"
2. "I see dead people."
3. "They're here..."
4. "Be afraid. Be very afraid."
5. "What's your favourite scary movie?"
6. "It's live! It's alive!"
7. "The power of Christ compels you!"
8. "Whatever you do, don't fall asleep."



ANSWERS.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____

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What's on Sept/October



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 24th October - 14.30pm
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Halloween After Dark in The Potters Forest

Raby Castle Park & Gardens - Oct 24th-October 29th - Various Opening Times - From £8
 Halloween After Dark Illuminated Trail in the Plotters Forest. As Dusk descends, The Plotters' Forest stirs with an eerie excitement.



Hedgehog Houses

The Bowes Museum, Barnard Castle, DL12 8NP - Oct 27th - 10.30 - 11.30
 This outdoor family activity is a chance to enjoy nature, play games and learn more about these fascinating animals and their homes
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Durham Christmas Festival

Durham City Centre - December 4-6 - FREE
 Durham Christmas Festival is a fabulous time to enjoy the city of Durham, with Christmas Carolling in the streets, Carols for all in Durham Cathedral and plenty of places to take a break and enjoy the city's hospitality



Durham Book Festival

Gala Durham / Clayport Library - Oct 9th - 11th - £5
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With a fun, festive medley, created by **CBeebies Musical Storyland** composer Daniel Whibley, to open the show – and a special visit from the Snowman himself – this magical show is perfect for the whole family to enjoy!

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Next level chicken pie

Discover the secrets to a great chicken pie. We use an easy one-pan filling, and bake it in a cake tin so it can be easily turned out and cut into neat wedges



Ingredients:

- ✓ 50g butter
- ✓ 1 leek
finely sliced
- ✓ 8 skinless, boneless chicken thighs
cut into chunks
- ✓ 1 thyme sprig
leaves picked
- ✓ 2 bay leaves
- ✓ 2 tbsp plain flour
- ✓ 100ml white wine
or dry sherry
- ✓ 300ml chicken stock
- ✓ 100ml crème fraîche
or double cream
- ✓ 1 tbsp mustard
(we used wholegrain, but use whatever variety you have)

For the pastry

- ✓ 150g cold butter
cut into cubes, plus extra for the dish
- ✓ 400g self-raising flour
plus extra for dusting
- ✓ 1 egg
beaten



Serves 6



Prep:
40mins



To cook:
1hr 15mins

Directions:

Step 1

Melt the butter in a casserole dish over a low heat. Add the leek, chicken, herbs and seasoning, and cook for 10-12 mins until the chicken is cooked, the leeks have softened, and the mixture is simmering. Stir in the flour and cook for 3 mins until the mix resembles a sandy paste. Pour in the wine or sherry, and bubble for 1 min, then stir in the stock, crème fraîche or cream and the mustard. Bring to a simmer. Cook for 10 mins until the chicken is cooked through. Season to taste, remove from the heat and leave to cool completely. Tip into a container and chill for 2 hrs, or overnight. Will keep chilled for up to two days.

Step 2

To make the pastry, rub the butter into the flour with a large pinch of salt until completely combined. Add half the beaten egg and 4 tbsp ice-cold water, and bring together into a dough using your hands, adding a little more water if needed. Knead for a minute so it completely comes together, then chill for 1 hr.

Step 3

Butter a 20cm loose-bottomed cake tin. Roll two-thirds of the pastry out until large enough to line the tin with some overhanging. Use it to line the tin, then spoon in the filling. Roll out the remaining pastry until large enough to cover the pie. Brush the edge of the pastry with a little of the remaining beaten egg, then drape over the pie to close it. Trim the edge, then press with a fork to seal. Chill until you're ready to cook. Will keep chilled for up to 24 hrs.

Step 4

Heat the oven to 220C/200C fan/gas 7 with a baking sheet inside. Brush the pie with some of the remaining beaten egg, then lightly score a criss-cross pattern on top using a sharp knife. Bake on the hot sheet for 20 mins, then brush with the rest of the egg, season with sea salt flakes and bake for 15-20 mins more until deep golden. Remove from the oven and rest for 10 mins, then carefully remove from the tin, put on a board and cut into wedges to serve.



CHRISTMAS 2026 AT THE HONEST LAWYER HOTEL

Christmas is coming, and we've got a whole festive season of celebrations planned at The Honest Lawyer Hotel! Whether you're planning your Christmas party, a festive meal with the family, a creative afternoon or a big New Year's Eve celebration, there's something for everyone.

CHRISTMAS FAYRE MENU

30th November – 23rd December plus Boxing Day 2 courses £28.95pp | 3 courses £34.95pp

WREATH MAKING CLASS

Wednesday 9th December 2pm–4pm £45pp

Join Nicola Henderson-Begg

for a fully guided festive wreath-making workshop, with hot turkey baps, stuffing, roast potatoes and gravy included.

CHRISTMAS DAY SIX-COURSE LUNCH

£95.95 per adult | £45.95 per child under 12

Sit back, relax and let us take care of Christmas Day with a fabulous festive menu including canapés, starters, a taster course, your choice of main, desserts, tea, coffee and petit fours.

NEW YEAR'S EVE PARTY

31st December From 6:30pm–1am DJ & disco Party games Buffet served at 8pm Countdown to 2027!

Why not make a night of it?

Add an overnight stay for £69 per room, including bed & breakfast, based on two sharing a standard double or twin.



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