

**MIDDLETON HALL  
MAIN STREET  
MIDDLETON  
PICKERING  
YO18 8NX**

**APPLICATION TO VARY CONDITION  
FOLLOWING GRANT OF PLANNING  
PERMISSION  
REF NO 07/00995/FUL**

**PLANNING STATEMENT**

**PREPARED ON BEHALF OF  
DR & MRS T THORNTON**

**July 2016**

**LILIAN COULSON PLANNING CONSULTANT**

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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This Planning Statement accompanies an application under S73A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 to retrospectively remove or vary a condition following grant of planning consent. Section 73A of the Act provides, among other things, for retrospective planning applications to be made in respect of development which has been carried out without permission, and for applications for planning permission to authorise development which has been carried out without complying with some planning condition to which it was subject. Planning permission granted under S73A will have effect from the date on which the development was carried out. As per S73, the Local Planning Authority can grant such permission unconditionally or subject to different conditions. The original planning permission will continue to subsist whatever the outcome of the application.
- 1.2 The proposed variation of the condition is to retrospectively legitimise a restriction on the use of a dwelling that has been undertaken continuously since mid 2008. Planning permission and Listed Building consent were granted for the change of use and alteration of an outbuilding to form residential accommodation in January 2008, which very quickly after was used for holiday accommodation, as per two other converted buildings on the site. All of these buildings fall within the curtilage of Middleton Hall, a Listed Building, and form award winning holiday accommodation.

## **2.0 PLANNING HISTORY AND CONTEXT**

- 2.1 Dr and Mrs Thornton acquired Middleton Hall in 1996 and since that date have carefully restored and improved Middleton Hall itself, taking care to ensure that all works were sensitive to its Grade II listing and sympathetic to its character. They have also restored the various buildings within its grounds for residential use, initially intended for use by their family but soon after, in order to help fund the continual improvements and maintenance of the property, the three converted buildings have all been used as award winning holiday accommodation, jointly marketed as 'Noelle's Cottages'. These additional outbuildings are not mentioned in the List Entry Description but as buildings associated with, and ancillary to, the original listed Hall they are afforded the same protection and listed status and therefore required Listed Building Consent for works as appropriate. A total of 11 planning permissions are recorded by Ryedale District Council as granted for the property, although some Full and Listed Building applications are 'linked'. A copy of Historic England's List Entry of Middleton Hall as listed on the National Heritage List for England (NHLE) is attached in Appendix 1 as background.
- 2.2 These planning permissions were all obtained and the works undertaken during the first 15 years period that Dr and Mrs Thornton lived at Middleton Hall (the last approval listed obtained in 2010 and implemented in 2011). Ryedale Council's Planning and Conservation

officers have visited the property on numerous occasions to hold pre-application discussions and to make site inspections for the applications and are therefore extremely familiar with the site. All planning applications submitted for the alterations / extensions to the buildings have been approved and there is no history of any refusal. All works have been undertaken to a high standard sympathetic to the original Listed Building. I am advised by my clients that there are currently no, and indeed have never been, any enforcement actions issued by the Council as a result of any breaches in planning control for the site. Neither have there been any complaints from neighbours during this period.

- 2.3 The individual buildings are currently in use as follow: Middleton Hall itself as private residential, with Applestore Cottage, The Barn and The Coach House as three separate holiday cottages. Both the residential and the holiday use fall within Use Class C3 (Dwellinghouses) of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended). Since both are within the same Use Class, planning permission is not required to change from private residential to holiday use. Use Class C3 - where a property is in 'use as a dwellinghouse (whether or not as a sole or main residence)' - is explained by the Planning Portal guide as follows:

**'C3 Dwellinghouses** - this class is formed of 3 parts:

- *C3(a) covers use by a single person or a family (a couple whether married or not, a person related to one another with members of the family of one of the couple to be treated as members of the family of the other), an employer and certain domestic employees (such as an au pair, nanny, nurse, governess, servant, chauffeur, gardener, secretary and personal assistant), a carer and the person receiving the care and a foster parent and foster child.*
- *C3(b): up to six people living together as a single household and receiving care e.g. supported housing schemes such as those for people with learning disabilities or mental health problems.*
- *C3(c) allows for groups of people (up to six) living together as a single household. This allows for those groupings that do not fall within the C4 HMO definition, but which fell within the previous C3 use class, to be provided for i.e. a small religious community may fall into this section as could a homeowner who is living with a lodger.'*

- 2.4 The three cottages on the site – Applestore Cottage, The Barn and The Coach House - are all two bedroom cottages and each accommodates 4 or 5 persons. Whilst these have each now been let as holiday accommodation for a number of years, the use of each cottage under current Planning legislation falls within the same Use Class (ie C3 dwellinghouses). The Planning Permissions which have been granted do not contain any restrictive conditions requiring occupation to be limited to holiday use and as such there is no restriction for the use other than the limitations afforded by Use Class C3. Therefore, no material change of use would occur if the buildings were used for either permanent residential accommodation or holiday use. Therefore, provided they continued as holiday accommodation in their current form with no further alterations, no further planning permission would be required. This provides flexibility in that they can be used either as residential accommodation or continue in use as holiday accommodation as required.

- 2.5 However, the only exception to this is the Full planning consent for The Barn granted in 2008 and implemented that year where occupation is restricted as '*ancillary to the use of Middleton Hall*'. Planning permission was applied for in this form as, at that time (in 2007 when the

application was submitted), it was intended that the Thornton's son would live in it as ancillary accommodation. However, he left home very shortly after (in early 2008, soon after the conversion work was completed) and the cottage was immediately added to The Coach House and Applestore Cottage business as a third holiday let property. Ryedale District Council has been aware of the use of The Barn as holiday accommodation for a number of years and my clients advise that it has not at any time in this intervening period taken any enforcement action regarding the occupation restriction. This additional use has never been hidden but the extant planning condition has been overlooked as an oversight once the physical works were completed to the correct standard in accordance with the approved drawings. The availability of the three holiday cottages has been publicised locally and nationally, including on the internet, and there have been numerous articles about the holiday let business in again both local and national Press when 'Noelle's Cottages' has won awards. The use of The Barn as holiday accommodation is also specifically referred to in the Design and Access Statement which supports the planning application submitted to Ryedale Council to extend Applestore Cottage in 2009/10, when again site visits were undertaken by the planning officer prior to its approval. Furthermore, as the holiday accommodation is C3 residential use, a Lawful Development Certificate could be applied for stating that The Barn has been used for holiday accommodation and as a separate dwelling since mid 2008. However, the simpler and most transparent solution to regularise the holiday use is to retrospectively approve under S73A the additional use of the property as holiday accommodation.

### **3.0 PLANNING PERMISSION NO. 07/00995/FUL: RETROSPECTIVE REQUIREMENT TO VARY CONDITION 2**

- 3.1 In 2007, two planning applications were submitted for the *'Change of use and alteration of outbuilding to form residential annex / private function space for Middleton Hall with associated external landscaped space'*. Both this Full application and the linked Listed Building application (ref 07/00996/LBC) were approved on 8 January 2008. The same conditions to be discharged (standard time restriction and approval of materials) regarding the physical works to the building were attached to both consents but additional conditions were attached to the Full planning consent. One of these (condition 2) restricted the future usage of the building once works were complete.
- 3.2 A Design and Access Statement by the architect supported both planning applications. This stated that the barn had previously been used as storage and ancillary space for Middleton Hall. It advised that it is situated within the grounds of Middleton Hall, on its eastern boundary in a relatively enclosed courtyard setting, and formed part of an important range of ancillary buildings at Middleton Hall. The proposals were to restore the building and convert it to residential use for the owners of the Hall, and to also use it as a large function space for the house. As stated above, the original intention was for the Thornton's son to live here, but he soon moved out into totally independent accommodation and an alternative use had to be found to ensure that the building would be well maintained (heated, ventilated, plumbing used etc) to ensure its continued upkeep following the restoration work. There was also found to be no need for it as a regular entertainment space due to the extensive nature of Middleton

Hall itself. Mrs Thornton had already set up 'Noelle's Cottages' and was letting The Coach House and Applestore Cottage as holiday accommodation. She therefore started to also advertise and let The Barn as a third holiday cottage in mid 2008. (For completeness, Applestore Cottage was further extended and improved in 2010.)

- 3.3 The planning officer's report recommending approval of the application considers the impact of the proposals on the residents of Middleton Hall itself as well as on neighbours, saying: *'In terms of impact of the proposal on the existing amenities of neighbouring occupiers, the building is situated in the existing domestic curtilage of Middleton Hall which is presently used for parking cars and family activities. It is not therefore considered that the change of use of the building will have a significant adverse impact on the existing amenities of neighbouring occupiers. This is however subject to the application being conditioned to ensure that the building is only used in accordance with Middleton Hall and not as a separate dwelling.'*
- 3.4 Condition 2 of the planning consent therefore reads: *'The accommodation hereby permitted shall be, and shall remain, ancillary to the use of the dwelling currently known as Middleton Hall, shall not be sold or let off separately and shall be used only by members of the family of the occupier of that dwelling'*. The Reason being: *'In order to protect the existing amenities of both neighbouring occupiers and the occupiers of Middleton Hall, and to satisfy the requirements of Policy H7A of the Ryedale Local Plan.'*
- 3.5 Whilst it is appreciated that the amenity of occupiers of neighbouring properties (including those of Middleton Hall) is an important issue, in reality, the 'misuse' of The Barn in the intervening years as holiday accommodation has not caused any amenity problems to any of its neighbours, not least due to the careful management of the holiday accommodation business by Noelle Thornton. The Barn has been part of the successful 'Noelle's Cottages' business since 2008 and there have been no complaints either direct to the owners or the Ryedale District Council of any disturbance or loss of amenity. As stated above, the occupation of The Barn as a holiday cottage has never been hidden and indeed 'Noelle's Cottages' has received many awards over the years. These confirm that The Barn has been used as one of the three holiday cottages of the business since 2008 and has played its part in helping to paying for the continued maintenance and preservation of Middleton Hall and its grounds since this date.

#### **4.0 TOURISM AWARDS RECEIVED AND EVIDENCE OF USE**

- 4.1 Mr and Mrs Thornton decided to enter 'Noelle's Cottages' into the 'Welcome to Yorkshire White Rose Awards' in mid 2008, partly to have an outside professional appraisal of the cottages but also in response to suggestions from visitors and local people who felt that the high quality accommodation and service being provided deserved wider recognition. The 'White Rose Awards' recognise and reward the very best of the tourism industry throughout Yorkshire. The Thorntons certainly never expected it to win the 'Best Self Catering Holiday Cottages Award' in October 2008. In press articles in the 'Malton and Pickering Mercury' and 'Malton Gazette and Herald' Noelle Thornton said: *"We started with the idea we would like to offer the sort of accommodation and holiday experience we look for ourselves. We wanted well-equipped cottages with all the facilities you would expect at home. There is original art-*

work on the walls and each cottage has its own garden area in addition to the use of the paddock with trampoline. Plans for next year include landscaping the paddock area with more fruiting and flowering trees to offer a butterfly-friendly area, building a living hut from willow trees, mainly for young people and creating a large landscaped area in front of the Barn so guests will have greater privacy and two gardens to choose from." These press articles confirm that all three cottages – ie Applestore Cottage, The Coach House and The Barn – were all appraised as part of the Award judging and were all an integral part of the 'Noelle's Cottages' business, thus confirming that there was excellent public knowledge that The Barn was being used for holiday accommodation at this time.

- 4.2 Further accolades came in February 2009 when The Sunday Times named 'Noelle's Cottages' as one of the '50 top holiday cottage centres in Britain'. In April 2009 the 'Malton and Pickering Mercury' and the 'Malton Gazette and Herald' again published articles announcing that 'Noelle's Cottages' had now scooped the national Gold award for the best self catering holiday at the prestigious Enjoy England for Excellence Awards. They had qualified for the finals after winning the regional White Rose Awards the previous year. The Gold Award was jointly awarded to 'Noelle's Cottages' and 'The Woodhouse Farm Cottages' as best in class in the 'Self catering holiday of the year' category. The Guardian also reported that 'Noelle's Cottages' was one of the two Gold winners of the Enjoy England Travel Awards, describing the three cottages '*incorporating modern interiors and their own gardens*', with '*owner Noelle providing homely touches such as freshly baked scones on arrival*'. Extracts of press releases of the various Awards are included in Appendix 2 to provide further evidence of the longstanding and continued holiday use.



- 4.3 Over the years 'Noelle's Cottages' has been regularly reviewed (and booked) on Tripadvisor where it consistently receives 'Excellent' reviews. The first Tripadvisor review of 'Noelle's Cottages' in November 2006 is titled '*Self catering at its very best*' and says '*there is little wonder that the Yorkshire Tourist Board awarded them five stars*'. The Barn is first reviewed in June 2009 and is titled '*Stunning barn conversion*', with this reviewer stating '*Their latest unit is The Barn, designed and decorated in an uncompromising modernist style. While this style will not appeal to everyone, we were delighted with it: every time we returned from a shopping forage or sightseeing trip the lofty space and decor never failed to impress and*

excite us. During our week a photographer did a photo-shoot for a magazine - *The Barn is really cutting-edge stuff for the Yorkshire Moors, as my own pictures hopefully illustrate*. With 15 pages of reviews on Tripadvisor, dating from 2006 until early July 2016 (latest stay reviewed), of which 142 reviewers out of 149 rate 'Noelle's Cottages' as 'Excellent', there is clear evidence that all three holiday cottages have been regularly and consistently well used over the years, with the business so well run that there is no evidence of any amenity complaints from neighbours throughout this period. The high level of satisfaction noted is consistent with the ethos that Dr and Mrs Thornton employ generally regarding Middleton Hall, where they have employed local consultants and tradesmen, sourced local building material that respected the character of the Listed Building and local area, employ local staff to help look after the accommodation, provide local quality foods in 'Welcome Packs', and generally encourage their visitors to visit local tourist and commercial outlets and spend money in the local economy.

- 4.4 A more recent (more formal) recommendation of 'Noelle's Cottages' was the review undertaken by Alison Flanagan in July 2013 for 'Britain's Finest' where it heads the list of her 'Ten of the best Self-Catering Properties in Yorkshire'. This is still provided within 'Britain's Finest' currently listing for 'Noelle's Cottages', which can be found listed under 'Luxury Self Catering UK accommodation'. See <http://www.britainsfinest.co.uk/selfcatering/selfcatering.cfm/searchazrefi/noelles-cottages>.
- 4.4 A full description of the properties and their availability is also available on <http://www.noellescottages.co.uk/>. The 'Noelle's Cottages' website provides a full history of the business and how the three holiday cottages were converted, and again confirms that the holiday business including all three properties – ie. Applestore Cottage, The Barn and The Coach House - has been running successfully and publically for many years.



## 5.0 CONCLUSION

- 5.1 Whilst condition 2 of the planning consent may have been imposed as a safeguard *'to protect the existing amenities of both neighbouring occupiers and the occupiers of Middleton Hall'*, in reality the additional use of The Barn as holiday accommodation as part of the 'Noelle's Cottages' business has not proved to be detrimental to the amenity of any of the occupiers concerned. The Barn has been used successfully mainly for holiday accommodation and also

on occasions for personal use since 2008 to date – a period of around 8 years – without any complaint to either Dr or Mrs Thornton or to Ryedale District Council.

- 5.2 There is therefore no known reason why this S73A application to vary Condition 2 of the planning consent granted in 2008 should not be approved to regularise the current planning situation and retrospectively approve its longstanding use as a holiday cottage. We request that the additional use of The Barn as holiday accommodation be added to the list of uses permitted for this dwelling and propose the following suggested wording for the replacement condition: *'The accommodation hereby permitted shall be, and shall remain, ancillary to the use of the dwelling currently known as Middleton Hall. It shall be used only by and in association with members of the family of the occupiers of that dwelling and as holiday accommodation.'*



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**PLANNING STATEMENT APPENDICES**

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**APPENDIX 1: Copy of Historic England's List Entry of Middleton Hall as listed on the National Heritage List for England (NHLE)**

**APPENDIX 2: Various press articles providing evidence of when The Barn was first used as holiday accommodation, as part of the 'Noelle's Cottages' business**

## Middleton Hall, Middleton

**DESCRIPTION:** Middleton Hall

**GRADE:** II

**DATE LISTED:** 10 November 1953

**ENGLISH HERITAGE BUILDING ID:** 382455

**OS GRID REFERENCE:** SE7825785351

**OS GRID COORDINATES:** 478257, 485351

**LATITUDE/LONGITUDE:** 54.2579, -0.8002

**LOCATION:** A170, Middleton, North Yorkshire YO18 8NS

**LOCALITY:** Middleton

**LOCAL AUTHORITY:** Ryedale District Council

**COUNTY:** North Yorkshire

**COUNTRY:** England

**POSTCODE:** YO18 8NS

## Listing Text

MIDDLETON A 170  
SE 7885-7985  
(north side)  
15/37 Middleton Hall  
10.11.53  
GV II

Hall. Early-mid C18 with early C19 extension. Sandstone ashlar front with chamfered quoins; rear and sides of pink and cream brick; slate roof; brick stacks with stone caps. Wing red brick in English garden wall bond with chamfered sandstone quoins; slate roof with brick stack. Central stairhall, double-depth plan; wing added to right. 2-storey, 5-bay front, the quoined centre bay breaking forward. Stone steps up to door of 6 fielded panels with fanlight in keyed round-arched surround; open-pedimented stone doorcase with engaged fluted Doric columns. All windows 12-pane sashes; keyed, pedimented architrave at first floor centre and eared architraves elsewhere, all with stone sills on grooved consoles. First-floor band. Moulded eaves cornice, returned at each end, and balustraded parapet interrupted at centre by a pediment enclosing a roundel. Front and rear end stacks where mansard roof changes pitch. Rear: Gothick-glazed Venetian staircase window, flanked by paired 12-pane sashes beneath segmental gauged brick arches. Left return: 2 similar windows to attic. Ramped-up and flattened parapet to gable end. Wing: 2-storey, 2-window front, set back from main front. Ground floor obscured by extruded lean-to conservatory. First-floor 12-pane sashes with stone sills and flat gauged brick arches. Boxed modillion eaves. Rear stack to hipped roof. Right return: 2 tripartite sashes, with stone sills and cambered brick arches with rusticated stone keyblocks, to

ground floor. First-floor windows similar to front. Interior not inspected.

Listing NGR: SE7826185348

*This text is a legacy record and has not been updated since the building was originally listed. Details of the building may have changed in the intervening time. You should not rely on this listing as an accurate description of the building.*

<https://historicengland.org.uk/>Source: English Heritage

## MIDDLETON HALL

### List Entry Summary

This building is listed under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended for its special architectural or historic interest.

Name: MIDDLETON HALL

List entry Number: 1149720

### Location

MIDDLETON HALL, A170

The building may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.

County: North Yorkshire

District: Ryedale

District Type: District Authority

Parish: Middleton

National Park: Not applicable to this List entry.

Grade: II

Date first listed: 10-Nov-1953

Date of most recent amendment: Not applicable to this List entry.

### Legacy System Information

The contents of this record have been generated from a legacy data system.

Legacy System: LBS

UID: 382455

## Asset Groupings

This list entry does not comprise part of an Asset Grouping. Asset Groupings are not part of the official record but are added later for information.

## List entry Description

### Summary of Building

Legacy Record - This information may be included in the List Entry Details.

### Reasons for Designation

Legacy Record - This information may be included in the List Entry Details.

### History

Legacy Record - This information may be included in the List Entry Details.

### Details

MIDDLETON A 170 SE 7885-7985 (north side) 15/37 Middleton Hall 10.11.53  
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Listing NGR: SE7826185348

Selected Sources

Legacy Record - This information may be included in the List Entry Details

National Grid Reference: SE 78257 85351

Map



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The above map is for quick reference purposes only and may not be to scale. For a  
copy of the full scale map, please see the attached PDF - [1149720 .pdf](#)

The PDF will be generated from our live systems and may take a few minutes to  
download depending on how busy our servers are. We apologise for this delay.

This copy shows the entry on 14-Apr-2016 at 12:36:37.

# Couple are delighted with tourism 'Oscar'

by Sheila Elgey  
sheila.elgey@yrnmtf.co.uk

CHAMPAGNE corks are popping at Noelle's Cottages in Middleton because they've won the regional tourism Oscar for being the best self catering holiday cottages.

Pickering GP Tim Thornton and his wife, Noelle, who is a Marie Curie nurse, scooped the prestigious White Rose Award at a glittering ceremony held at Bridlington Spa - although they weren't there to receive it themselves.

Noelle said: "We were on holiday in Cambodia at the time so our daughter Rachel, who is 17 and our head housekeeper Alice Thompson, went in our place.

"They were stunned when Noelle's Cottages were announced as the winners, but we understand Rachel did extremely well when she accepted the award."

It is the first time the couple has entered the White Rose Awards and the win now puts them in the running for national honours in the Enjoy England for Excellence Awards run by VisitBritain, the national tourism agency.

Tim and Noelle bought Middleton Hall near Pickering in 1996 and after improving the main house, decided it was time to sort out the rundown outbuildings in the grounds.

The former apple store was the first to be tackled.

Tim said: "We have five children and made it into a den for them but after a while realised they weren't really using it, so we decided to convert it into guest accommodation for holidaymakers in May 2005.

"Our guests really enjoyed it and we enjoyed having them, so the next rundown outbuilding we converted was the coach house."

Both Applestore Cottage and the Coach House have traditional "cottagey" furnishings but the couple's third conversion, which opened this year - the barn - has contemporary decor.

Noelle says she entered the White Rose Awards to have an outside appraisal of her



ABOVE: Dr Tim Thornton and his wife Noelle whose Noelle's Cottages have won self catering holiday cottages of the year in the White Rose Awards relax in the gardens 0841880  
Picture: Andrew Higgins

LEFT: The latest conversion, the barn, with its contemporary design

submitted

and holiday experience we look for ourselves. We wanted well-equipped cottages with all the facilities you would expect at home."

There is original art-work on the walls and each cottage has its own garden area in addition to the use of the paddock with trampoline.

Plans for next year include landscaping the paddock area with more fruiting and flowering trees to offer a butterfly-friendly area, building a

choose from.

Tim said the success of Noelle's Cottages is down to teamwork - builders, landscape gardeners, organisers, arrangers and cleaners led by housekeeper

Alice Thompson, together with his children

He added: "We are a little stunned but delighted to have been awarded best in class and will strive to maintain the standard."

Meanwhile winner of the

the Year. Pickering's 17 Burgate was a finalist in the guest accommodation class.

Other finalists were: Best Newcomer to Tourism: The Black Swan Tearoom and Patisserie, Helmsley and Go Ape! at Dalby Forest; Sustainable Tourism Award: The Moors National Park Centre, Danby; Access for All Tourism Award: Easthill Farm House and Gardens, Thornton-le-Dale; Tourist

<http://www.maltonmercury.co.uk/news/local/couple-are-delighted-with-tourism-oscar-1-918184>

## Couple are delighted with tourism 'Oscar'

Updated 10:56 Tuesday 14 October 2008. Published 14:06 Monday 13 October 2008

**CHAMPAGNE corks are popping at Noelle's Cottages in Middleton because they've won the regional tourism Oscar for being the best self catering holiday cottages.**

Pickering GP Tim Thornton and his wife, Noelle, who is a Marie Curie nurse, scooped the prestigious White Rose Award at a glittering ceremony held at Bridlington Spa – although they weren't there to receive it themselves.

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"Our guests really enjoyed it and we enjoyed having them, so the next rundown outbuilding we converted was the coach house."

Both Applestore Cottage and the Coach House have traditional "cottagey" furnishings but the couple's third conversion which opened this year – the barn – has contemporary decor.

Noelle says she entered the White Rose Awards to have an outside appraisal of her cottages but never expected she would win best in class for the whole of Yorkshire. She said: "We started with the idea we would like to offer the sort of accommodation and holiday experience we look for ourselves. We wanted well-equipped cottages with all the facilities you would expect at home."



There is original art-work on the walls and each cottage has its own garden area in addition to the use of the paddock with trampoline.

Plans for next year include landscaping the paddock area with more fruiting and flowering trees to offer a butterfly-friendly area, building a living hut from willow trees, mainly for young people and creating a large landscaped area in front of the Barn so guests will have greater privacy and two gardens to choose from.

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He added: "We are a little stunned but delighted to have been awarded best in class and will strive to maintain the standard."

Meanwhile winner of the Guest Accommodation of the Year Award was Low Penhowe, at Burythorpe, which was also a finalist in the Taste of Yorkshire Award and the Tourism Website of the Year. Pickering's 17 Burgate was a finalist in the guest accommodation class.

Other finalists were: Best Newcomer to Tourism: The Black Swan Tearoom and Patisserie, Helmsley and Go Ape! at Dalby Forest; Sustainable Tourism Award: The Moors National Park Centre, Danby; Access for All Tourism Award: Easthill Farm House and Gardens, Thornton-le-Dale; Tourist Information Centre of the Year - Malton TIC; Yorkshire Pub of the Year: Blue Bell Inn and Restaurant with Rooms, Weaverthorpe; Hotel of the Year (up to 50 bedrooms): The White Swan, Pickering.

Read more: <http://www.maltonmercury.co.uk/news/local/couple-are-delighted-with-tourism-oscar-1-918184#ixzz4EDrhAol0>

# Former barns on the luxury list

By DAVID JEFFELS

A COMPLEX of derelict historic outbuildings in Ryedale, converted into luxury holiday accommodation, has been named as one of the 50 top holiday cottage centres in Britain.

The accolade, given by *The Sunday Times*, is for Noelle's Cottages at Middleton Hall near Pickering, an imposing Georgian listed building owned by Dr Tim Thornton and his wife Noelle.

The honour comes hot on the heels of the White Rose Award for Self-Catering in Yorkshire which the cottages won last year and now, says Dr Thornton, they are in line for a national award after being shortlisted in the England for Excellent awards.

The outbuildings are the former stables and an apple store for Middleton Hall, built for a wealthy Whitty mariner. But they had fallen into a delapidated state when the couple took over the hall in 1996.

"We set about restoring the hall itself and then tackled the outbuildings which, despite their



ACCOLADES: Tim and Noelle Thornton in the garden of their 'fairy tale' holiday cottages

condition, were very attractive as buildings and with potential," said Dr Thornton.

Mrs Thornton entered the White

Rose Awards to have an outside appraisal of them.

"I never expected they would be made the best in their class in

Yorkshire," she said.

"They were three broken-down buildings that needed restoration and to be put to good use.

"Applestore Cottage evolved gradually but when we realised people liked what we offered we developed the Coach House and this year the Barn as well."

The *Sunday Times* praised the Thorntons for the venture. "There is a fairy-tale feel to this trio of bucolic cottages," said the paper's critical travel section.

"It's partly to do with their gardens, specially planted to attract bluebells and goldfinches. It's partly the home-made scones. But it's mainly the smiley welcome from Noelle," the report concluded.

The cottages have what is described as "substantial" and antique furniture, with original artwork on the walls.

The White Rose Awards praised Noelle's provision of home-made bread, marmalade and a bottle of wine to make people feel quite spoiled.

The Thorntons are now building a living hut from willow trees to entice for young people.

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# Health trust launches

[http://www.theargus.co.uk/news/4103174.Former\\_barns\\_on\\_the\\_luxury\\_list/?ref=rc](http://www.theargus.co.uk/news/4103174.Former_barns_on_the_luxury_list/?ref=rc)

## Former barns on the luxury list



Tim and Noelle Thornton in the garden of their 'fairy tale' holiday cottages.

5 Feb 2009 / [David Jeffels](#)

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A COMPLEX of derelict historic outbuildings in Ryedale, converted into luxury holiday accommodation, has been named as **one of the 50 top holiday cottage centre in Britain.**

The accolade, given by **The Sunday Times**, is for **Noelle's Cottages** at Middleton Hall near Pickering, an imposing Georgian listed building owned by Dr Tim Thornton and his wife Noelle.

The honour comes hot on the heels of the White Rose Award for Self-Catering in Yorkshire which the cottages won last year and now, says Dr Thornton, they are in line for a national award after being shortlisted in the England for Excellent awards.

The outbuildings are the former stables and an apple store for Middleton Hall, built for a wealthy Whitby mariner. But they had fallen into a delapidated state when the couple took over the hall in 1996.

"We set about restoring the hall itself and then tackled the outbuildings which, despite their condition, were very attractive as buildings and with potential," said Dr Thornton.

Mrs Thornton entered the White Rose Awards to have an outside appraisal of them.

"I never expected they would be made the best in their class in Yorkshire," she said.

"They were **three broken-down buildings** that needed restoration and to be put to good use. "Applestore Cottage evolved gradually but when we realised people liked what we offered we developed the Coach House and **this year the Barn as well.**"

The Sunday Times praised the Thornton's for the venture. "There is a fairy-tale feel to this trio of bucolic cottages," said the paper's critical travel section.

"It's partly to do with their gardens, specially planted to attract bluetits and goldfinches. It's partly the home-made scones. But it's mainly the smiley welcome from Noelle," the report concluded.

The cottages have what is described as "substantial" and antique furniture, with original artwork on the walls.

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The Thorntons are now building a living hut from willow trees to entice for young people.

<http://www.marketinglancashire.com/media-room/press-releases/2009/4/24/enjoy-england-awards-for-excellence-winners-a1173>

## Enjoy England Awards For Excellence - Winners

Friday, 24th April 2009

The Enjoy England Awards for Excellence were held in The National Railway Museum in York, on 23 April as a celebration of St George's Day.

### Winners 2009 :

**Bed and breakfast of the year** Augill Castle, South Stairmore near Kirkby Stephen, Cumbria

([www.stayinacastle.com](http://www.stayinacastle.com); 01768 341937)

**Sustainable tourism award of the year** The Venus Company, Halwell, Totnes, Devon

([www.venuscompany.co.uk](http://www.venuscompany.co.uk); 01803 712648)

**Hotel of the year** Gidleigh Park, Chagford, Devon ([www.gidleigh.com](http://www.gidleigh.com); 01647 432367)

**Caravan holiday park of the year** Hidden Valley Park, West Down, near Ilfracombe, North Devon

([www.hiddenvalleypark.com](http://www.hiddenvalleypark.com); 01271 613 837)

**Taste of England award** The Pipe & Glass Inn, South Dalton, Beverley in East Yorkshire

([www.pipeandglass.co.uk](http://www.pipeandglass.co.uk); 01430 810246)

**Small visitor attraction of the year** 78 Derngate: The Charles Rennie Mackintosh House and Galleries in

Northampton ([www.78derngate.org.uk](http://www.78derngate.org.uk); 01604 603407)

**Large visitor attraction of the year** Harewood House in Harewood, Leeds ([www.harewood.org](http://www.harewood.org); 0113 218

1010)

**Self-catering holiday of the year** – was jointly awarded to Noelle's Cottages in Middleton, Pickering, North

Yorkshire ([www.noellescottages.co.uk](http://www.noellescottages.co.uk); 01751 472 283) and the Woodhouse Farm Cottages in Staplow,

Ledbury, Herefordshire ([www.thewoodhousefarm.co.uk](http://www.thewoodhousefarm.co.uk); 01531 640030).

**Best tourism experience of the year** is The London Walks ([www.londonwalks.com](http://www.londonwalks.com); 020 7624 3978)

**Best business tourism of the year** The Rheged Centre in Penrith, Cumbria ([www.rheged.com](http://www.rheged.com); 01768

868000)

**Outstanding customer service of the year** Robert Evans of the SS Great Britain Trust in Bristol

([www.ssgreatbritain.org](http://www.ssgreatbritain.org); 0117 926 0680)

**Tourist Information Centre of the Year** (TIC) winner is The Chesterfield Tourist Information Centre in Rykneld Square, Chesterfield ([www.visitchesterfield.info](http://www.visitchesterfield.info); 01246 345777)

The **Tourism Website of the Year** winner is [www.northumberlandbedandbreakfast.co.uk](http://www.northumberlandbedandbreakfast.co.uk); the website for The Old School five-star bed and breakfast in Newton on the Moor, Northumberland (01665 575 767)

The **Access for All Tourism** winner is The Hytte, a Norwegian inspired, traditional timber mountain lodge near Hexham in Bingfield near Hexham, Northumberland ([www.thehytte.com](http://www.thehytte.com); 0143 4672 321)

The **Journalist of the Year** is Chris Haslam for his family holiday campervan series in The Sunday Times

**Travelmail award for The Best Day Out**, is The Minack Theatre in Cornwall ([www.minack.com](http://www.minack.com); 01736 810181)

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**For images of the 'Gold' and 'Silver' winners, please visit**<http://pa.photoshelter.com/c/grahamjepson>

**For A-roll footage of all the Gold winners, please visit** [www.itnconsulting.co.uk/enjoyengland](http://www.itnconsulting.co.uk/enjoyengland)

The Enjoy England Awards for Excellence 2009 celebrate the best of English tourism and are in their twentieth year. They promote healthy industry competition and high standards, helping to ensure England's place as a world-class destination.

There are seventeen different categories, from visitor attractions and hotels to self-catering accommodation and caravan parks. Entries are submitted to the regional tourism partners and then short-listed to the national finals, culminating in the Awards ceremony in April.

**For further information please contact Helen Batte, Tourism Press Officer on 01925 400235 or 07764 239856 or** [Helen.Batte@nwda.co.uk](mailto:Helen.Batte@nwda.co.uk)

**For urgent out of hours press enquiries please call 01925 400259.**

**For further information and to view previous press releases visit us at** [www.nwda.co.uk](http://www.nwda.co.uk)

The Northwest Regional Development Agency (NWDA) leads the economic development and regeneration of England's Northwest and is responsible for:

- Supporting business growth and encouraging investment
- Matching skills provision to employer needs
- Creating the conditions for economic growth
- Connecting the region through effective transport and communication infrastructure
- Promoting the region's outstanding quality of life

# And the winners are ...

**This year's Enjoy England Awards for Excellence recognise the best in tourism**

**Access for all tourism award**  
**Gold:** The Hytte, Hicham, Northumberland. The Hytte is a Norwegian-inspired, traditional timber mountain lodge on 1.35 acres of farmland, where 70% of bookings include a guest with disabilities. All four bedrooms are accessible for people with disabilities and the garden, play area, petio furniture, wildlife zone and hot tub are suitable for wheelchair users, who are also able to enjoy the surrounding fields.

Guests are provided with details of local carers should they need assistance. The Hytte's owners have also shared their accessibility expertise with members of the Hudson's Wall Trust and other tourism providers (01434 872 331, [thytte.com](http://thytte.com)).

**Silver awards:** Elm Farm Cottages, Boston, Lincolnshire (01509 290 440, [elmfarmcottages.co.uk](http://elmfarmcottages.co.uk)); National Theatre, London (020 7452 3400, [nationaltheatre.org.uk](http://nationaltheatre.org.uk)).

**Business tourism award**  
**Gold:** The Rhed Centre, Fetherth, Cumbria. The centre is a hub for business, entertainment and community events. It has two exhibition halls and seven meeting rooms, including a 236-seat auditorium. It also provides team-building activities and indoor games such as laser clay shooting. There is a Discovering Cumbria exhibition, and shops and restaurants selling local produce (01795 808 000, [rhed.com](http://rhed.com)).

**Silver awards:** Image, Leicester (08450 364 624, [welcomeimage.co.uk](http://welcomeimage.co.uk)); ExCel Centre, London (020 7669 5000, [excel-london.co.uk](http://excel-london.co.uk)).

**Caravan holiday park**  
**Gold:** Hidden Valley, Devon. Set amid 27 acres of wooded countryside at West Down, near Ilfracombe, Hidden Valley provides pitches for touring caravans, motor homes and tents plus a three-bedroom self-catering chalet. Several years of investment have provided upgrades including an amenities block with underfloor heating (01238 803 807, [hiddenvalleypark.com](http://hiddenvalleypark.com)).

**Silver awards:** Park Office Caravan Park, Wincoburn, Cumbria (01780 881 000, [parkoffice.co.uk](http://parkoffice.co.uk)); Seaford, Caravan Park, Seabrook, Northumberland (01665 720 600, [seafordpark.co.uk](http://seafordpark.co.uk)).

**Large visitor attraction**  
**Gold:** Harwood House, Yorkshire. Home to the Queen's cousin, the Earl of Harwood, this stately home has an outstanding art collection, splendid game rooms and a fascinating history exhibition. It is set in spectacular landscaped grounds, including the wild garden and an adventure playground (0113 281 0200, [harwood.org](http://harwood.org)).

**Silver awards:** Blenheim Palace, Oxfordshire (01865 082 000,



Brunel's SS Great Britain, which is featured among this year's award winners, is popular with young visitors fascinated by the 19th-century vessel

**benhelmsplace.com**); Science Museum, London (020 800 8686, [sciencemuseum.org.uk](http://sciencemuseum.org.uk)).

**Outstanding customer service**  
**Gold:** Bob Evans, Brunel's SS Great Britain, Bristol. The steward Bob Evans has developed bespoke tours of the SS Great Britain, ranging from the ship's history to Brunel's engineering innovations (0117 930 0600, [ssgreatbritain.org](http://ssgreatbritain.org)).

**Silver awards:** Ian Russell, Wrotham Barns, Norfolk (01603 783 760, [wrothambarns.co.uk](http://wrothambarns.co.uk)); John Reaps, Magna Science Adventure Centre, Rotherham (01109 720 002, [vismagna.co.uk](http://vismagna.co.uk)).

**Self-catering holiday of the year**  
**Gold:** Noelle's Cottages, North Yorkshire, and Woodhouse Farm Cottages, Ledbury, Herefordshire. Noelle's cottages are a collection of three contemporary and easy-estimated cottages in the grounds of a Georgian house near Pickering. Visitors receive freshly baked scones on arrival (01719 472 281, [noellescottages.co.uk](http://noellescottages.co.uk)).

The Woodhouse Farm Cottages are three sensitively converted barns, one of them a 19th-century manor house. Extras include beauty treatments, picnic hampers and gourmet food supplies (01532 640 000, [thewoodhousefarm.co.uk](http://thewoodhousefarm.co.uk)).



**enjoyEngland**  
**Awards for Excellence**  
**2009**  
 Celebrating 20 Years of Excellence in England

**Silver awards:** Brackborough Hall Coach House Holidays, Louth, Lincolnshire (01507 603 190, [brackboroughhall.com](http://brackboroughhall.com)); The Beach House, Blackpool (01253 352 699, [thebeachhouseblackpool.co.uk](http://thebeachhouseblackpool.co.uk)).

**Small visitor attraction**  
**Gold:** 78 Derrigate, The Charles Bennie Mackintosh House & Galleries, Northampton. This is a well-preserved showcase of the Scottish architect's style, with a new visitor centre (01604 620 407, [78derrigate.org.uk](http://78derrigate.org.uk)).

**Sustainable tourism award**  
**Gold:** The Venus Company, Totnes, Devon. The firm runs cafes and beach shops in Blackpool Sands, East Portlemouth and Bighury on Sea, Devon, and Tolcarne, Cornwall, which aim to integrate environmental and social care into the business. Initiatives include water monitoring, solar panels, and local and ethically sourced products (01609 782 640, [venuscompany.co.uk](http://venuscompany.co.uk)).

**Silver awards:** The Hytte, Hicham (01434 872 331, [thytte.com](http://thytte.com)); The Deep, Hull (01482 481 000, [thedeep.co.uk](http://thedeep.co.uk)).

**Tourism website of the year**  
**Gold:** The Old School at Newton & Meot, Northumberland. Potential customers can take virtual tours, rooms and immediately check availability on the website of the five-star bed and breakfast. The links to attractions such as Aln Castle and Lindisfarne (01665 555 northumberlandbedandbreakfast.co.uk).

**Silver awards:** Museum of Science Industry, Manchester (0161 812 7333, [mim.org.uk](http://mim.org.uk)); Compton Pool Farm, Marlton, Devon (03803 872 241, [comptonpool.co.uk](http://comptonpool.co.uk)).

**Tourist information service**  
**Gold:** Chesterfield Tourist Information Centre, Derbyshire. Located next to Chesterfield's most famous attraction, the Church of St Mary and All Saints, with its crooked spire, the information centre is key to the town's tourism and accommodation booking service. Staff helped to develop a series of trails to enjoy by car, on foot and by bike. The gifts on sale are sourced locally (01246 345 777, [visitchesterfield.info](http://visitchesterfield.info)).

**Silver awards:** Visit Colchester Information Centre, Essex (0206 800, [visitcolchester.com](http://visitcolchester.com)); Royal Windsor Information Centre, Berkshire (01753 743 900, [windsor.gov.uk](http://windsor.gov.uk)).

<https://www.theguardian.com/travel/2009/apr/24/travel-award-winners-enjoy-england>

## England tourism awards toast the pub

The English pub scoops the outstanding contribution to tourism award in a year when recession has turned the spotlight on UK holidays

The prize for outstanding contribution to tourism was reserved for the English pub at this year's Enjoy England Travel Awards. Photograph: Masaoki Habano/Corbis

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**Andy Pietrasik**

Friday 24 April 2009 00.01 BST Last modified on Monday 27 April 2009 14.50 BST

The humble pub, a caravan park in Devon, a castle-cum-B&B in Cumbria and country cottages set in a Herefordshire orchard were among the winners in the annual [Enjoy England Awards for Excellence](#), announced yesterday (St George's Day) in the National Railway Museum in York.

In a year when twice as many Britons are planning to spend their holidays in the UK compared with last, and when hopes are high of attracting more overseas visitors because of the withered state of sterling, Lady Cobham, the new chairperson of [VisitEngland](#) (the English Tourist Board), said: "More than ever this year, the winners showcase excellent value for money English breaks and some of England's best-kept secrets."

Among these were Hidden Valley caravan park in Devon – advance bookings for camping and caravan breaks in the UK are up by 40% on 2008. The winner of the small visitor attraction of the year was 78 Derngate (The Charles Rennie Mackintosh House and Galleries) in Northampton. Figures released earlier this month by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport show that attendance among stay-at-home Britons at museums and galleries in the past six months has continued to rise, with 45.3% of the English population attending at least one over the past year.

Neil Morrissey collecting the Enjoy England Awards for Excellence on behalf of England's publicans. Photograph: Graham Jepson

But the special prize for the outstanding contribution to tourism was reserved for the "great English pub" - "for the integral part they play in the



fabric of the English way of life and the opportunity they provide for domestic and international visitors to meet local people and enjoy local foods and drink". This is despite the fact that one of Britain's oldest industries is in a dire state, being squeezed by the recession, the smoking ban, cheap supermarket booze, taxation (up again by 2% in Tuesday's budget) and soaring operating costs. Recent figures from the Campaign for Real Ale (Camra) revealed that an average of 57 pubs are closing their doors for the last time every month in Britain.

VisitEngland said that, according to its research, many overseas visitors put visiting a pub high on their list of things to do when on holiday in England.

The award was collected by Neil Morrissey, actor and proprietor of Ye Olde Punch Bowl in Yorkshire (as well as the New Three Mariners Inn in Laugharne, Wales) on behalf of England's publicans.

Here is the full list of winners in the 20th year of the awards organised by VisitEngland to find the best places to stay and visit in England:

## **Bed and Breakfast of the year**

**Augill Castle in Cumbria:** A Victorian fantasy of a medieval castle situated between the Lake District and the Yorkshire Dales that has been restored over the course of 12 years and offers 11 bedrooms.

- Doubles from £80pp pn, [stayinacastle.com](http://stayinacastle.com), +44 (0)1768 341937.

## **Hotel of the Year**

**Gidleigh Park Hotel** in Dartmoor National Park, Devon. Set in 54 acres of parklands, the 24 rooms offer river, moorland or forest views. The restaurant, under chef Michael Caines, has been awarded two Michelin stars for the past 10 years. Judges commented that the hotel displayed: "An overall faultless wow experience on par with best of England."

- Doubles from £155 pn. [gidleigh.com](http://gidleigh.com), +44 (0)1647 432367.

## **Self-Catering Holiday of the year**

Two winners this year - **Noelle's Cottages**, in Middleton in Yorkshire, are set in the grounds of a Georgian House close to Pickering. The three cottages incorporate modern interiors and have their own gardens. Owner Noelle provides homely touches such as freshly baked scones on arrival.

**Woodhouse Farm Cottages** are three converted medieval cottages located in an apple orchard in Ledbury, Herefordshire, a few hundred yards from an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Each has its own south-facing garden set within 15 acres of grounds belonging to The Woodhouse, a Grade II-listed, part-moated medieval hall house.

- Noelle Cottages, [noellescottages.co.uk](http://noellescottages.co.uk), +44 (0)1751 472 283.
- Woodhouse Farm Cottages, [thewoodhousefarm.co.uk](http://thewoodhousefarm.co.uk), +44 (0)1531 640030.

## **Caravan Holiday Park of the Year**

**Hidden Valley Park, in Devon:** Set in 27 acres of countryside, it is the only park in the region to offer facilities all-year-round for caravans, motor homes and campers as well as a three-bedroom self-catering chalet sleeping up to five people. Judges described the park as "an outstanding touring site catering for both caravanners and tent tourers, with an excellent commitment to the environment and a standard of customer care which all tourism businesses should aim to emulate".

- Large pitches for tents start at £17 per night for two people. [hiddenvalleypark.com](http://hiddenvalleypark.com), +44 (0)1271 813 837.

## **Taste of England Award**

**The Pipe & Glass Inn**, in South Dalton near Beverely, East Yorkshire, stands on the site of the original gatehouse to Dalton Park which dates back to the 15th century. It was taken over by Kate and James Mackenzie in 2006 and has been refurbished. The Michelin "Bib Gourmand" country inn and pub is committed to sourcing as much local and seasonal produce as possible – hare and juniper pasty and rabbit rissoles on the lunch menu. The wine list is sourced entirely from small producers and there is also a wide selection of regularly changing hand-pulled ales on offer.

- [pipeandglass.co.uk](http://pipeandglass.co.uk), +44 (0)1430 810246.

## **Sustainable Tourism Award of the Year**

**The Venus Company** comprises a mix of cafes and beach shops in Blackpool Sands, East Portlemouth and Bigbury on Sea in Devon and Tolcarne in Cornwall. The company aims to integrate environmental and social care through green-friendly policies like water monitoring, the use of solar panels, recycling, locally sourced organic food and ethically sourced

products. The Venus Beach Wildlife Fund provides visitors' educational programmes on beach conservation. Judges commented that "the English coastline is one of our major assets and The Venus Company are doing a great job in acting as one of its custodians".

• [venuscompany.co.uk](http://venuscompany.co.uk), +44 (0)1803 712648.

### **Small visitor Attraction of the Year (fewer than 100,000 visitors per year)**

**78 Derngate: The Charles Rennie Mackintosh House and Galleries in Northampton:** Restored to its historic 1917 appearance under a £1.4m restoration which includes a new visitor centre and exhibition space, as well as a new staircase that wraps around a four-storey glass cabinet holding a series of exhibits relating to both Mackintosh and Bassett-Lowke.

• [78derngate.org.uk](http://78derngate.org.uk), +44 (0)1604 603407.

### **Large Visitor Attraction of the Year (more than 100,000 visitors per year)**

**Harewood House in Leeds:** Home to the Queen's cousin, the Earl of Harewood. Built in the mid-18th century, the house features outstanding art collections, state rooms and a "below stairs" exhibition. Set in landscaped grounds, Harewood House also includes formal gardens, gentle woodland, a Bhutanese stupa, waterfall, bird and Himalayan garden.

• [harewood.org](http://harewood.org), +44 (0)113 218 1010.

### **Best tourism experience of the year**

Launched in the 1960s, **The London Walks** are one of the oldest urban walking companies in the world and offer a year-round service. The company runs more than 400 different walking tours fronted by 70 guides, including crime historian and Jack the Ripper expert Donald Rumbelow, plus qualified Blue Badge and City of London Guides. New themed walks are added every year - in 2008, the company launched a series of walks on Gandhi's London and a Foodies' West End walk.

• [londonwalks.com](http://londonwalks.com), +44 (0)20 7624 3978.

### **Access for All Tourism**

**The Hytte** is a Norwegian-inspired, traditional timber mountain lodge near Hexham in Bingfield, Northumberland. This self-catering holiday cottage was designed by its owners with the aim of creating a place where people of all abilities can come together. All four bedrooms, as well as the hot tub, outdoor garden areas and patio furniture are accessible to wheelchair users. A grass grid also provides access to the surrounding field and wildlife areas.

• [thehytte.com](http://thehytte.com), +44 (0)143 4672 321.

## **Other winners**

**Best business tourism of the year:** The Rheged Centre in Penrith, Cumbria ([rheged.com](http://rheged.com), +44 (0)1768 868000).

**Outstanding customer service of the year:** Robert Evans of the SS Great Britain Trust in Bristol ([ssgreatbritain.org](http://ssgreatbritain.org), +44 (0)117 926 0680).

**Tourist Information Centre of the Year (TIC):** The Chesterfield Tourist Information Centre in Rykneld Square, Chesterfield ([visitchesterfield.info](http://visitchesterfield.info), +44 (0)1246 345777).

**Tourism Website of the Year:** [northumberlandbedandbreakfast.co.uk](http://northumberlandbedandbreakfast.co.uk) - the website for The Old School five-star bed and breakfast in Newton on the Moor, Northumberland (+44 (0)1665 575 767).

# Holiday cottages scoop gold prize

by Sheila Elgey  
sheila.elgey@yrnltd.co.uk

THE best of the best - that's Noelle's Cottages at Middleton.

Owners Tim and Noelle Thornton scooped the national gold award for the best self-catering holiday at the prestigious Enjoy England for Excellence Awards held at the National Railway Museum in York on Friday.

The Thorntons were absolutely thrilled - especially as they qualified for the national finals by entering and winning the regional White Rose Awards last October at their first attempt.

Mrs Thornton said: "We're so happy to have won. It's quite amazing and we can hardly believe it."

Her husband, a GP in Pickering, and Noelle, who is a Marie Curie nurse, bought The Hall in Middleton in 1996 and after improving the main house decided it was time to sort out the rundown outbuildings in the grounds.

The former apple store was the first to be tackled. At first they made it into a den for their five children but realised they weren't using it, so converted it to guest accommodation for holidaymakers.

The change proved popular with their guests so the next building to be tackled was the coach house.

Both Applestore Cottage and The Coach House have traditional "cottagey" furnishings but the couple's third conversion, The Barn, which opened last year, has contemporary decor.

Dr Thornton said: "The formula we used was very simple and that was to deliver high-quality holiday accommodation that we would like to visit ourselves."

"With this in mind we made sensitive restorations on the cottages, filled them with good modern or antique furniture, beds, bedding and fabrics and made sure the kitchens were fully-equipped and enjoyable to use."

"We added original artwork from local artists and provided a wood-burning stove, DVDs and free Broadband."

Each cottage has its own garden and use of the hall's grounds, guests are greeted on arrival with homemade scones and cream together with a welcome pack of locally produced and sourced food.

The formula has worked because for the last cou-



ABOVE ... Noelle and Tim Thornton, of Noelle's Cottages, are presented with their self-catering holiday of the year award by Gary Verity, chief executive of Welcome To Yorkshire, and below, the Thorntons outside the cottages



ple of years Noelle's Cottages have enjoyed an 85 per cent occupancy rate.

Winning the gold award for self-catering holiday of the year is expected to boost that success.

But Dr Thornton added: "Our greatest reward is to hear the comments from our guests when they recognise 'we go that extra mile' and 'have thought of everything'."