

Beat the dreary winter blues



- 1. Practical colours are lifted with a dash of gold (image Jacaranda Carpets)
- 2. The White Company has excellent storage systems, clothes hangers and laundry baskets
- 3. Jazz up your home with bold wallpaper from Fired Earth



YVONNE JONES Interiors



THE winter can be a long haul, and even as the evenings start to lengthen there's still a hefty stretch before we see green on the trees again.

It's important to give ourselves a treat, and where better to look for a bargain than at Deals in Style (www.dealsinstyle.co.uk), offering superb discounts on smart hotels such as Llansantffraed Court, Abergavenny, The Falcondale, Lampeter and Penmaenuchaf Hall, Dolgellau as well as fabulous spa breaks at The Metropole, Llandrindod Wells.

As a triple dip recession threatens, we are all looking at ways of keeping a watch on the finances, and one relatively painless way to go about things is to be less wasteful.

Another is to take a DIY approach, making our own jams, marmalades and pickles, baking bread, and making cakes and biscuits instead of buying them. A portion of the garden can be set aside for growing vegetables, while for urban dwellers cultivating an allotment overcomes the problem of compact city gardens.

Excess fruit and veg can be bartered for eggs with someone who keeps chickens, or swapped for produce that you are not growing on your patch.

Have a look at www.selfsufficientish.com for eclectic, practical and supremely entertaining advice. Sections encompass tips on budget living (including ways to reduce your utility bills), wild food forage courses, home brewing and keeping livestock.

The great thing about being more self-sufficient is that it can improve your home environment. If you decide to grow flowers in the summer rather than buy them, at great expense from the florist, then your borders will be a riot of colour.

Try growing things from seed as this is far more cost effective than buying potted plants from a garden centre.

Start planning now, so that you are ready for the growing season.

You can also do your bit for the environment and your pocket by ditching the tumble drier and using the good old washing line. Try www.linepost.co.uk for washing line systems.

Clothes that have been dried outside are also easier to iron – which has to be a serious plus point.

Pulley systems that take the washing aloft inside your home – where the hot air gathers – are ideal for those all too frequent damp days when the washing can't go outside.

Take a look at Pulley Maid's choices – www.pulleymaid.com (01743 249 039).

For attractive linen baskets to stash the laundry until it hits the machine, take a look at The White Company (www.thewhite-company.com). This company's storage systems are also worth looking at, as well as their cedar-scented hanging hearts for the wardrobe.

Keeping your colour scheme practical is essential if you have a family and/or animals. Accent colours provide the lift. This charcoal rug from Jacaranda Carpets (www.jacarandacarpets.com) is beautiful and practical, while the gold pouf gives a splash of colour.

Another way to indulge a desire for wild colours is with paint or wallpaper – have a look at Fired Earth (www.firedearth.com) for inspiration.

Yvonne Jones is a Royal College of Art trained designer, and owner of Chameleon Interiors. Call 029 2037 1277 or visit www.chameleoninteriors.co.uk



The Very Reverend Geoffrey Marshall, Dean of Brecon Cathedral, believes his house may be the oldest in Wales

Picture: Andrew James

It's a privilege to live in steadfast home of character and spirituality

THE Very Reverend Geoffrey Marshall feels very privileged to be living in his beautiful Grade I-listed home.

Not only does he love his job as Dean of Brecon Cathedral, but with that comes the opportunity to live in the four-bedroom deanery, which is attached to the cathedral.

Geoffrey, who shares his home with his wife Hazel, has lived in the deanery for almost five years and loves his dining room, which has wonderful views of the Brecon Beacons.

The 65-year-old father of three, who believes it's one of the oldest houses in Wales, said: "The dining room is in the newer wing of the house and although we don't use it a great deal, I love the fact there are three windows in there and it's lovely to look at the views of the

RACHEL MAINWARING Favourite room



Brecon Beacons. We spend most of the time in the kitchen, but the dining room is where we do our entertaining so it's probably one of my favourite rooms in the house.

"It's a privilege to live here, although it can be a bit like living in a goldfish bowl sometimes as we are attached to the cathedral and so visitors will walk past the windows but we love living here.

"When we first moved in I did some research on the house and I believe it might be the oldest in Wales.

"It was originally a monastery for

Benedictine monks and then it was closed by Henry VIII in the 16th century.

"It then went into private hands before going to the church in 1923 and became the deanery about 20 years ago.

"The dining room is in the newer bit of the house and I think was built in the 1700s."

The dining room is on the ground floor along with the kitchen, there is a study/spare bedroom and sitting room on the first floor and three bedrooms on the second floor.

The house also boasts an old medieval staircase that winds through the centre, as well as a newer wooden staircase too.

Most rooms also have original stone fireplaces, although the dining room has a more modern gas fire.

Geoffrey and his wife enjoy entertaining there and certainly had a full house at Christmas time with their three children, three grandchildren and all the in-laws staying for a family festive season.

"It's just my wife and I here now but it can get very busy when the children and grandchildren visit. Living in Brecon is lovely.

"It has the jazz festival and we often end up with people in the garden. There are so many windows we get to see what's going on but I honestly feel that it is a real privilege to be here.

"We haven't changed the decor at all since we moved in as it had been done just before but because it's a Grade-I listed building we have to keep it in heritage colours so we wouldn't be

able to change it dramatically colour-wise."

Geoffrey, who says he has no intention of retiring yet, has just returned from a pilgrimage to the Nile and one of his main interests is taking parties of up

to 30 on pilgrimages to the Middle East. We go to Israel, Palestine and the West Bank for 10 or 11 days for sight-seeing, worship and Bible-reading. That's my main interest when I'm not working. We love living here."

Steal Geoffrey's style



Serve up an afternoon treat with Fortnum's silver-plated three piece tea set, from £225 at www.fortnumandmason.com



Lay the perfect table with this gorgeous Regency lace oval tablecloth, £5.59 from www.dunelm-mill.com



Time everything perfectly with a carriage clock, £100 from www.johnlewis.com



Sit down to a family meal at a handsome Moscow Dining Table in mahogany with six chairs and two carvers, £826.50 from www.furnituredirectltd.co.uk



Have a seat on a comfy grey velvet brocade chair, £460 from www.crackingdesign.co.uk

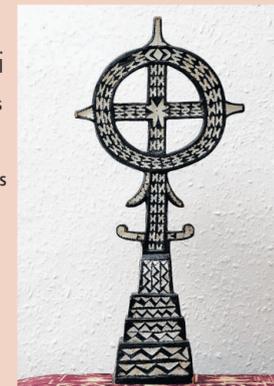
Favourite object

Geoffrey's favourite object is a wooden and pearl cross that came originally from the Solomon Islands.

He says: "This is a bit of a personal family heirloom. It's very, very light but it looks quite heavy. My father's grandmother was from New Zealand and his grandfather was from England and they met when they were both medical missionaries in the Solomon Islands in 1910.

"They married in 1916 but came back here when my great-grandfather was signed up for the First World War and this is the only thing they brought back with them.

"It's in the dining room at the moment but has been in various positions around the house."



Q. Is there anything stylish yet not overly "gushy" that you would recommend as a small token this Valentine's Day for my girlfriend?

A. I harp on every year about inflated flower prices, tacky gifts and unnecessary Valentine's presents but these wonderfully textured rope heart candles from Nordic House look incredibly real and would make a lovely, and very subtle, Valentine's gift. Available in white or grey, with matching larger rope candles also available, they would look great as part of a larger candle collection, perhaps displayed on a candle plate? The versions shown here cost £4 each. You can buy them online at nordichouse.co.uk or by calling 0845 475 1610.

Q. How can I pep up my 16-year-old son's bedroom? He has plain bedlinen and good furniture. It's just a splash of colour we're after... Help!



NICOLA WILKES

A question of design

www.walesathome.co.uk



A. Have you seen these amazing cushions from Quirk and Rescue on your travels? Perhaps not as they're quite new, having only been launched last year; but I wanted to bring your attention to them as I think they make a brilliant addition to any teenager's living space. This vibrant punk cushion is a Pistols-inspired love letter and each cushion is printed on 100% cotton drill and measures 45cm x 45cm. They are also supplied with a duck feather inner and cost a reasonable £55. Log on to www.quirkandrescue.com to place an order.

Q. I love the global/tribal influence that is big in interiors now but I just can't seem to find a way of integrating it into my traditional home. As I have a very classic style, should I give up and stick to what I know or can you recommend a way I can make this interior look work for me?

A. Don't give up! This trend is so big it's even filtering through into very

classic styles such as in Julia Brendel's new fabric collections, featuring a combination of bold colours and subtle spring shade variations in disparate styles. The range is an eclectic patchwork of cultures and different styles interwoven into modern western society that extends to include a beautiful range of cushions, tablecloths, lampshades and throws in a wide range of colours and sizes. Tones and intricate patterns are beautifully inspired by Asian and European cultural and artistic influences, folk designs, costumes, lace and embroidery from the 18th to early 20th centuries. This particular "Hungarica" cotton design is inspired by 19th-century Hungarian embroidered tablecloths, home furnishings and folk costume, with prices as follows: Hungarica Cotton £90.30/m; Hungarica Silk £151.71/m. Visit www.juliabrendel.com for more information on how to order, or call 01795 599 840.



Got a question for Nicola? Email her at nicola@walesathome.co.uk