

Weddings at Danby Castle



Danby Castle is building up its reputation as a great place for weddings – and in February was declared 'Venue of the Year' by Bridal magazine.

The awards are based upon nominations and votes from the magazine's readers, and the stunning, partially-ruined castle proved irresistible to romantics everywhere.

Danby Castle has been catering for weddings since 2008, when Duncan and Carolyn Bavister started up their events business.

With Duncan's 25 years in the music industry and Carolyn's long career in project management and business development, they combined their skills to provide all aspects of that 'perfect day'.

Carolyn said: "I'm thrilled with this award. We were up against some really strong competition and yet we beat the 'big guys' – this is such a great achievement for a small, recently-established family business. I'd like to say a massive thank-you to all our brides and grooms, our wonderful staff and suppliers, and to everyone else who voted for us."

Dating back to the 14th century, part of Danby Castle is now in ruins, but these – along with the surrounding moors – guarantee a stunning backdrop for events. With its links to Catherine Parr – who married Henry VIII after the death of Lord Latimer of Danby (who owned the castle in the 16th century) – it's a picturesque and romantic setting, and it's easy to see why it captures the heart of many a bride-to-be.

Downe Arms, Wykeham

Danby Castle is not the only Estate establishment to receive praise: the Downe Arms in Wykeham has just been upgraded from three-star to four-star status. The additional star was granted following an unannounced inspection and recognises the progress that Jane Abdennadher and partner Paul Bower have made in improving services and facilities at the country inn. As a result it's now also a highly popular venue for weddings, but at the southern end of the Dawnay Estates.



Jake Finnigan with the biggest catch, a pike, at Wykeham Lakes

Wykeham Lakes – The one that didn't get away!

If anyone needed any proof that Wykeham Lakes offer some fine fishing, one catch in November couldn't have made it clearer.

17-year-old Jake Finnigan was enjoying some late fishing, spinning from a boat. With one of his final casts of the evening a gentle 'take' turned into a real challenge as Jake realised he had a huge pike on his line.

Jake, a fishery management student at Bishop Burton College, showed his skills by expertly playing the pike whilst manoeuvring the boat back to shore, where fishery manager Mike Heelis helped get the monster fish into the landing net.

Nothing of this size had ever been caught in the lakes before, and more scales had to be called for to get an accurate record. With witnesses on hand the final reading was 39lb 15oz – tantalisingly close to the magic 40lb mark. But with the huge pike now returned to the water to carry on growing, anglers can be sure that there are some fitting challenges for their skills in the lakes – and the 30 lb scales that had been adequate until this year will probably have to be replaced with some that can cope with the stock that Mike is producing!

Semi-retirement for Brian

Local man Brian Craggs has retired from tending sheep – but that doesn't mean that the moles can sleep easy!

Brian and his wife Decima (the youngest of ten children) have lived in Wykeham village for many years. Brian was often seen about the village on his bicycle, looking after his small flock of sheep. He is also, however, the village's key – but unofficial – mole-catcher, using traditional methods of trapping to ensure that the moles are kept under control.

Brian has decided to hang up his shears and sold his flock to a neighbour. He's still going out on his regular mole-trapping rounds, though, so that particular skill continues to be put to good use.



NEWSLETTER

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Welcome to the Spring newsletter

This newsletter is its normal eclectic mix, bringing together state of the art fibre optics, the maintenance of a seat from a medieval court and one of the largest pikes caught in the country. I hope you enjoy it.

The Viscount Downe

Wykeham wins the 'race to infinity'!

High-speed wireless internet comes to Wykeham

Whilst BT runs a nationwide 'race to infinity' campaign, promoting a fast internet service that may not be available for some years, and the government hopes for fast broadband by 2015, Wykeham businesses and residents are already enjoying connection speeds that most urban and rural businesses can only dream of.



Lord Downe makes the internet connection live.

Katrina Shamel, the Estate's Business Centre Manager, said: "In May of last year the Dawnay Estates installed a fibre optic connection at the Wykeham Business Centre, providing the offices with a high-speed internet service. This reliable and consistent 'next generation' service is now being extended to the village of Wykeham and Farfield workshops via a wireless system."

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"Residents of Wykeham village will be among the first in the county with access to high-speed fibre optic broadband, many years before their neighbours can connect via the 'BT Infinity' option."

The incredible speed and reliability of the new service will transform domestic use. Downloading music or video files will take seconds rather than hours and for the first time locally it will be possible to watch streamed high-definition movies without pauses or loss of service. In addition it will be possible to run multiple applications simultaneously in the same household with neither the individual quality nor speed being affected.

It is anticipated that by the end of the summer the wireless connection will be extended to the residents and businesses based in Ruston, providing them with similar access to the rapidly growing international digital economy, the home entertainment options and the social networking culture that is now so much a part of everyday life.

Departures, arrivals and landmarks

After a six year association with Dawnay Estates, **Emma Hepples** has not only left her most recent job – she has left these shores altogether, starting a new life with her family in Australia.

This was Emma's second farewell: she first joined as Wykeham Business Centre Manager but left when she started her family. Later she returned as a job-share PA to Estate Director, Robert Sword.

Lady Downe and the Estate Office staff organised a surprise farewell party for Emma, who is now enjoying life in Melbourne.

Robert Sword said: "Emma made an enormous contribution to the Estates. In her first job she was responsible for letting the newly-completed offices at the Wykeham Business Centre. Her second job included acting as editor of the Dawnay newsletter and managing the Estate's insurance. I am very grateful for her contribution to the smooth running of the Estate Office."

Taking over some of Emma's duties – including that of newsletter editor – is **Gilly Collinson**. Having spent a long career in PR, Gilly balances her two days at Wykeham with work as a freelance reporter and artist.

Far from being a newcomer, **Paul Lakin** has just celebrated 30 years' service with the Estates.

Paul joined straight from school as a sixteen-year-old in 1980, originally working in the Forestry department, followed by 'Wykeham Trees' which later became Wykeham Mature Plants. He is now Planting Away Foreman, and is responsible for supervising the increasing amount of contract landscaping and planting. The 30-year milestone was recognised at the annual Christmas Eve 'bash', where Paul was presented with an engraved carriage clock.

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Previous editions of this newsletter are available on our website www.Dawnay.co.uk

Further information on Dawnay Estates and its enterprises can be found on the following websites: www.Dawnay.co.uk www.WykehamMaturePlants.co.uk www.StHelensCaravanPark.co.uk

Care for the infrastructure

Property Maintenance and Refurbishment – Another Forth Road Bridge!



Local oak was cut to restore the Danby Court Room Seat

One of the main responsibilities of the Estates is the provision of residential property. Thanks to the commitment, skills, and sometimes ingenuity of the Estate's tradesmen, there is rarely a problem that cannot be solved.

The properties are concentrated around the villages of Wykeham, Ruston and Danby. The newest of these were constructed in the mid fifties, and one group of 18 houses was built immediately after World War II, but the vast majority are well over 100 years old. Many are listed, or are within conservation areas or the North York Moors National Park, which brings with it a particular responsibility and specific guidelines that must be followed.

Over 95% of the houses are let, so it's imperative that the Estate provides reliable building maintenance services. Although at times this is a challenge – such as during the recent, record-breaking cold spell – the maintenance team work hard to make sure that the houses are kept in good repair, and to refurbish those that become vacant after a long-term let.

The small in-house team of building maintenance staff (joiner, stonemason and bricklayers) is supplemented by self-employed tradesmen, including plumbers, electricians and ground workers. The demands of the job require not just traditional skills, but also a bit of imagination and ingenuity. For example, when restoration work took place on the weather vanes on Wykeham Abbey, the long-missing 'full moon' that had adorned one of the vanes had to be replaced. In a flash of inspiration, the missing globe was replaced with a copper ball-cock – made fit for purpose by application of gold leaf!

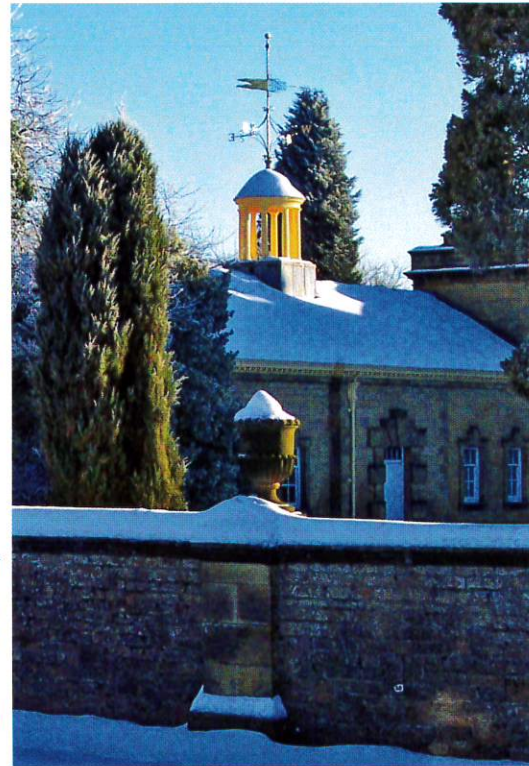
The work on the vanes themselves was also completed by the Estate's own building staff, demonstrating the versatility and talents that exist.

It was also a chance, however, to get a closer look at a little bit of local history: one of the vanes is punctured by a bullet hole allegedly made by Lord Downe's grandfather, the 10th Viscount Downe. Although there is much speculation about how this came about, the true details are now lost in the mists of time.

Whatever the story, the end result is that both weather vanes are now fully restored and back in place. Even better, they now both agree about which way the wind is blowing – something that they hadn't done for years!

Meanwhile, the programme to replace the lead on the Abbey roof continues – yet again using the expertise of local tradesmen.

On a less grand scale, important work goes on elsewhere too. No. 14 Wykeham has been refurbished, and now its traditional stone exterior houses a surprisingly contemporary interior. The modernisation has been sensitively handled however. A small cupboard next to the fire, which was originally used to keep salt dry, was lovingly restored by the maintenance team – even though the new tenants are likely to find other uses for the space! The transformation has proved popular, and interest in the newly updated single bedroom property was intense from prospective tenants – resulting in a successful letting.



One of the vanes is punctured by a bullet hole allegedly by Lord Downe's grandfather

Care for the infrastructure

55 Ruston – one of the Estate's 'Butterfield' cottages - has also recently been re-let. This is the end of a terrace designed by celebrated architect William Butterfield – more famous for having designed Keble College and Rugby School than for his modest residential achievements.

On the Danby Estate, the Bothy – a former garage-cum-workshop next to the keeper's house – has been converted into a flat which will accommodate the Danby Estate's soon-to-be-employed fourth game keeper. The building has been close-boarded with Western Red Cedar – home-grown

on the Estate at Bedale, felled by a forrester and cut into boarding by a local contractor.

More local timber – in this case oak – was used when the Court Room Seat at Danby Castle needed renovating. In the skilled hands of Steve Dees the ancient seat was lovingly restored – ready for another few hundred years' use.

Whether it's gilding on the weather vanes or the careful preservation of the 'salt cupboards', the Dawnay Estates takes its duty of care seriously – and is fortunate in having a great team of tradesmen able and willing to rise to whatever challenge they are faced with.



53 to 55 Ruston – "Butterfield" Cottages



No. 14 Wykeham – refurbishment under way

Shooting on the Estates

Dawnay Sporting – the international set

After a successful season for the Estate's shoots at both Wykeham and Danby, bookings are strong for next season. And it's no exaggeration to say that the reputation of Dawnay Sporting is now spreading world-wide.

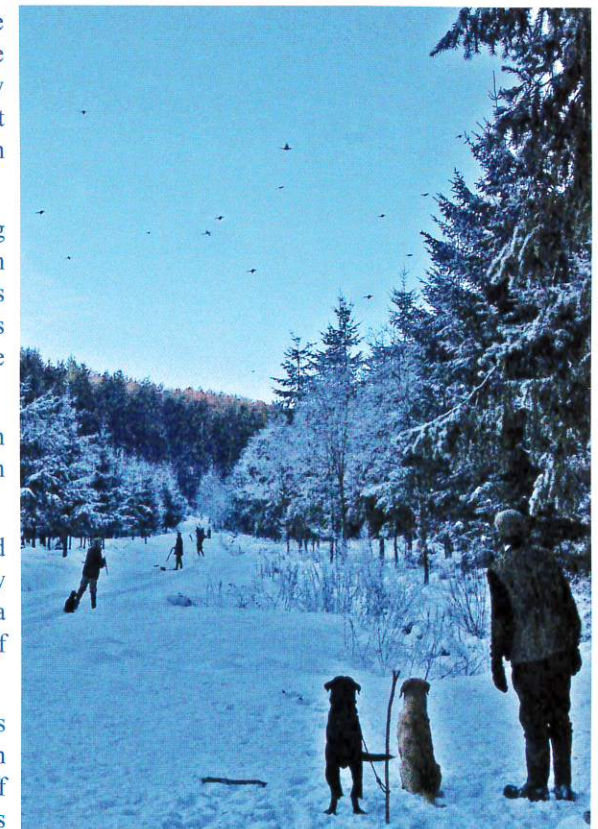
Danby's grouse moors have long attracted international guns, who enjoy the opportunity to test their skills on the most challenging of game birds in the glorious setting of the North York Moors. Thanks to the good work done by keeper Peter Snaith and his team, there has been a significant improvement over the last season, with increased grouse numbers and a healthy population of young birds.

Meanwhile the Abbey Shoot, which offers pheasant and partridge shooting at Wykeham, has been radically transformed over the last five years. In addition to the low ground around Wykeham Abbey it now incorporates the high ground valleys of Bedale, Yedmandale and Sawdondale. This testing terrain provides excellent high birds, and is proving popular with the experienced teams.

Abbey Shoot keeper, Matthew Steadman, and team have continued to maintain a high standard of well presented birds, even throughout the coldest winter on record, with only one day's shooting being lost.

It isn't surprising, therefore, that the reputation of both shoots has now spread far afield, with teams arriving from America, Holland and Belgium. Recently a Russian group has also booked for next season. This year, for the first time, a team from Cyprus was welcomed – who brought with them their own brand of Bloody Marys, although they refused to divulge the recipe!

Bookings are already going well for next season, with only a few grouse days remaining and intense interest in the Abbey shoot too. But although the season is now over until late August, the hard work for the game keepers and their staff continues, making sure that next season will be just as successful and popular as the one just gone.



A flurry of birds fly over the eager guns