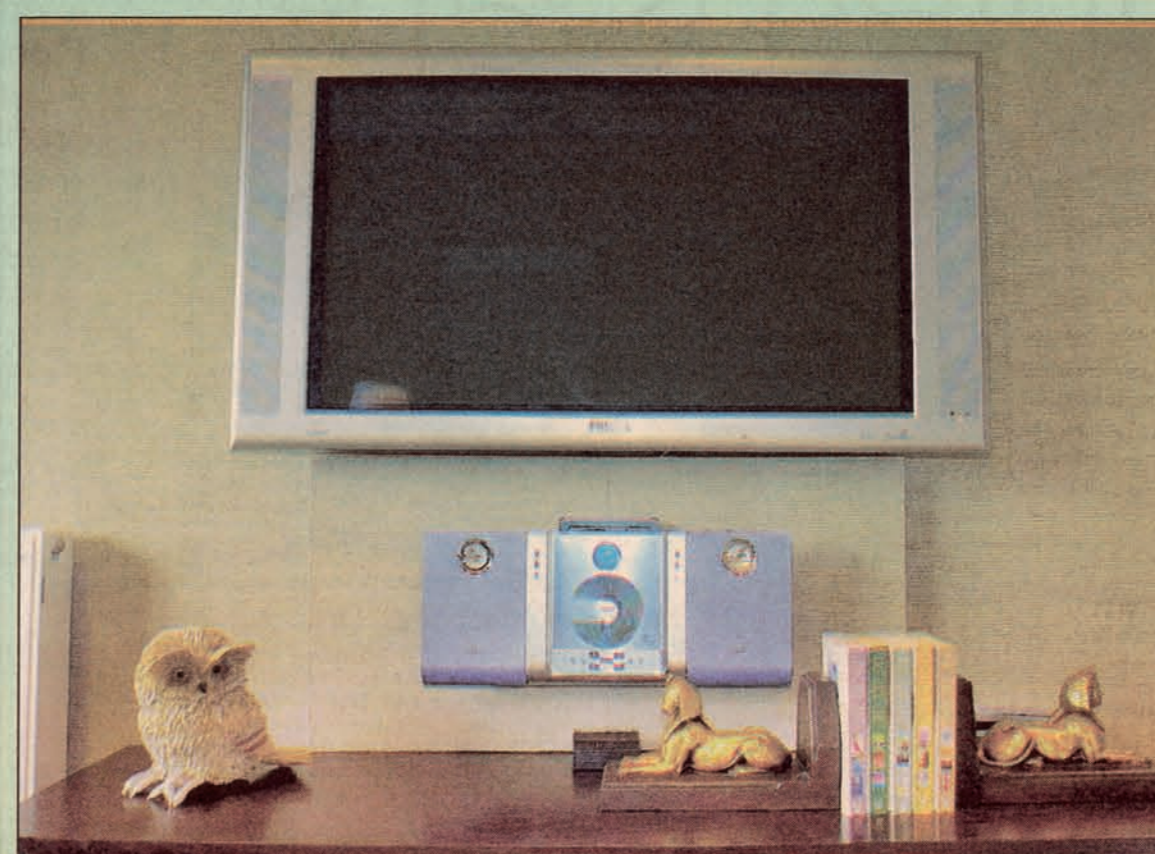


Number One - a B&B with sights set on tourism top spot. Elizabeth Gomm reports



SENSE OF STYLE: Scenes from some of the rooms in Mark and Claire Smith's ground-breaking B & B

BOUTIQUE

bed and breakfast



LUXURY FITTINGS: Attention to detail on the staircase and landing

VISITORS can enjoy a city-style chic stopover as a Blackpool B&B goes boutique.

Small, privately owned, Number One in St Lukes Road, South Shore, may have just two guest bedrooms - but they ooze luxury living!

In the sumptuous bedrooms, there are Siberian goose feather pillows and Egyptian cotton sheets, stylish seating areas, huge plasma televisions, hi-fi, DVD recorders and PlayStation game consoles. The superbly finished en suite bathrooms even have "watch-while-you-soak" plasma screen televisions set into the walls and stylish fittings. Each of the two suites are distinctively different and expensively dressed.

The interior design, down to the finest last detail, is the work of hotelier Claire Smith. It is her first project after completing a City & Guilds Interior Design course at Blackpool and The Fylde College. Claire and husband Mark sold the the award-winning Old Coach House in Dean Street earlier this year to buy 1 St Lukes Road.

They shared a vision of turning a private house, built as a gentleman's residence in 1935, into an exclusive boutique hotel, trading in 11 letting bedrooms for just two! They moved in there in June and haven't stopped working since. Mark, a trained kitchen and bathroom fitter, carrying out the

practical work and Claire the creative. They are now beginning to see the fruits of their labours. They have had their first guests - and they were delighted. Claire said: "They loved it, which is exactly what we had hoped."

Her interest in design grew out of owning the Old Coach House with its stylish bedrooms. "I enjoyed making them look special and found that guests really appreciated what I had done. They'd walk in and go "Oh, wow this is wonderful" which made me feel good.

"The design course was a bit of self-indulgence really, I wanted to take my interest further and I learnt so much from it ... stuff I'd never have anticipated. "From ways of using space and light to drawing to scale. It stood me in good stead for this."

Claire and Mark carried out their own extensive survey of up market B&Bs all over Britain, and a feasibility study was also carried out for them by Lancaster University. The study revealed a gap in the market in the resort, which Number One would begin to address. They were confident they could make Number One work and, if all goes to plan, win Claire the one award which has eluded her - the England for Excellence national award.

"We won the regional three or four times for the Old Coach House and went through to the national, but the best we did there was fourth.

"Here with fewer rooms we can go a step further to offer exceptional service. Our guests can enjoy all Blackpool has to offer and be pampered at the same time."

In the one public room there are leather chairs in the relaxing seating area and elegantly laid tables where guests can linger over breakfast. French windows open out to a patio overlooking the garden, with a turf area where golf enthusiasts will be able to practice their strokes. Claire plans extravagant breakfasts, which can be served in guests' rooms or in the morning room, at the time they choose. "It will be the little extras that will make staying here special," she said.

They are hoping they will be granted a licence so guests will be able to have Champagne breakfasts, Pimms in the afternoon, or a nightcap.

Claire, Mark and their son Ben, 16, also have their home in Number One but their space is clearly defined from that of their guests. "It's very important to strike the right balance," said Claire. Claire will be running Number One while Mark intends to go back to fitting kitchens and bathrooms again for the time being. She's looking forward to Easter when it will be fully finished ... and to seeing the reaction of her guests.

And judging from the the fantastic facilities they'll find, they won't feel short-changed at £125 per room.

TELL US

If you have a special story to tell, contact Women's Editor Elizabeth Gomm on 361831



DESIGN GURU: Claire with her original rough plans for the hotel, sitting in one of the completed bedrooms

Pictures: ROB LOCK

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