

Welcome

ISSUE 1 - 1st Nov 2009

We are delighted to welcome you to the first issue of our e-newsletter. We hope you enjoy this issue and those to follow in the coming months. You can look forward to: features about the wonderful businesses on our site; topical issues; competitions; offers and hints and tips on all aspects of your home. We'd love to hear what you think and receive your letters, questions and diaries of your own renovations and self-builds.

In this issue find out how you can win a **fantastic 2 night stay** in the most extreme 'Grand Design' ever! Check out details of our launch and get **free tickets** to the Home Building & Renovating Show in Harrogate. Read our exclusive interview with Francis Shaw, owner and renovator of Hellifield Peel.

Thank you for subscribing.

Christine Pearce & Paula Smith

Founder Directors



Paula Smith and Christine Pearce



Grand Designs 'star' to Launch Restoration & Beyond

We are pleased to announce that our website will go 'live' on Friday 6th November 2009. It will be launched at the Home Building & Renovating Show in Harrogate, North Yorkshire.

We will be joined for the ceremony by Francis Shaw of Hellifield Peel, nr Skipton, whose inspirational transformation of the 14th century Yorkshire ruin was a favourite of viewers of the Channel 4 *Grand Designs* series. Mr Shaw will be at our exhibition stand (number 335, in Hall B) at 3pm on the 6th November to cut the ribbon and officially launch our new web site.

The show runs from 6th—8th November and we have free tickets to give away. Visitors to our stand will have a chance to **win a two-nights stay at Hellifield Peel**. To claim your free tickets simply follow the link at www.restorationandbeyond.co.uk.

Our unique and innovative website will be available on our stand for visitors to explore and find out how shopping for home-related products and services will never be the same again! We look forward to meeting you there.

An Englishman's Home ...

Voted the nation's favourite Grand Designs house in 2007, Hellifield Peel Castle was transformed from a crumbling ruin by architect Francis Shaw. With foundations dating back to Saxon times, and previous owners including the Knights Hospitallers, the building was just perfect for someone who never quite outgrew his boyhood fascination for castles and tower rooms.

Here, Mr Shaw tells Restoration & Beyond about the extraordinary journey that he, his family and Hellifield Peel Castle have been on together.

R&B: How did you first discover Hellifield Peel Castle?

FS: I actually first saw it when I was just 14 and travelling north to Scotland for a family holiday. I was in charge of the map which meant we saw more than our fair share of castles, tower houses and ancient buildings on the way.

Almost 30 years later, having spent many of the intervening years in Dubai, I decided to look for somewhere to live in the Leeds area where I was working. I'd retained that childhood fascination with castles and tower houses so rather than consult local estate agents I looked at the Buildings at Risk register and there it was.

The owners had been trying to get rid of it for about 10 years and were just waiting for the right idiot to come along. That was in August 2003 and we bought it in October 2004.

R&B: How have the last five years been?

FS: Looking back, I really do wonder how we've managed to achieve what we have.

I was holding down a full-time job while working on the restoration, so it was a case of working flat out at evenings and weekends. For three years, I averaged about four hours sleep a night and even in winter temperatures of -9 C, I was having to get out there and work. Since we've finished I've put on a stone and a half in weight.

I have a very understanding wife (her father built and extended houses himself) and children who are used to growing up through utter chaos, which helps.

R&B: How did the link with *Grand Designs* come about?

FS: The first day the stonemasons came on site they got very excited and said we had to get in touch with the programme. I sent off a message saying "Just got a castle ... previous owner hung, drawn and quartered ... are you interested?" which got a fairly immediate response.

I think they found the combination of a castle and a not-quite grown-up schoolboy with not enough money too irresistible.

We got on really well with both the director and Kevin McCloud and it's given us a much better record of all we went through than an album of photographs could ever have done.

R&B: What have been the toughest challenges?

FS: The mortgage company bailed out half way through which left us not knowing whether the whole thing would go down the plughole. We had to buy our way out of it, but for a month we didn't know whether we'd be able to carry on.

The collapse of the interior wall, which had in the thirteenth century been part of the castle exterior was a huge loss – both emotionally and financially.

But you keep going – you have to. I'd wanted to live in a castle from the age of about six or seven so I couldn't give up.

R&B: Finally, what advice would you give to anyone about to embark on a big restoration project?

FS: Start small and work your way through the project. Don't jump straight into anything too big, particularly if you don't have the DIY skills. You need to understand the process of what's involved as well as having the practical skills to make it happen.

If you don't have the skills, find yourself a really good architect or project manager. If they're good, they'll effectively be working for free through saving you money on mistakes you'll otherwise make.

- Francis Shaw will officially launch Restoration & Beyond at the Home Building & Renovating Show on 6th November. He is a Director of Brewster Bye Architects who specialise in restoring Historic Buildings. Check out their pages on our website.

