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## PROPERTY OF THE WEEK

Imagine living in a Grade II star listed country house with seven acres of grounds and yet having the luxury of being able to “lock up and leave.” You can with an apartment and the one for sale boasts a front top balcony. **CAROLINE CULOT**, EDP property editor, visited apartment 7, Whitlingham Hall, Trowse, for sale for **£325,000** with **Bidwells**. See pages **2** and **3** for the story.

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## AROUND THE HOUSES WITH CHRIS HALL



In the first of his new monthly columns, Chris Hall talks about all kinds of property issues.

For years, probably like you, I've been wishing people a prosperous New Year - but is this really just a load of nonsense and did my good wishes the previous year actually make any difference? I suspect not! What probably made a difference to your 2011 was what you actually did with it, proactively, yourself. So this begs the question, what are you, indeed, going to do in 2012?

Whilst the financial news has been little but doom and gloom for three years or so now I have consistently seen that those involved in all areas of the property industry who simply refuse to allow any talk of recession to deter them have been the most successful, with many having enjoyed a record year in 2011.

It seems that those who just ride the boom tend to suffer most from any bust but those who set a steady course and deliberately focus on their specialised offering and their short, medium and long term strategies, tend to reap the rewards.

I like to think that this is what the businesses I am involved in have done and are doing - Iconic estate agencies, Home Stagers, the Mortgage Advice Bureau and others that are industry related have indeed focused on the strength of their product and their target markets, giving specialist advice in specialised

areas and have not only been successful in 2011 but have also hit the ground running in 2012.

Possibly more importantly, not only have they been successful but so many of their customers have shared that success. Success breeds success and it is natural that home sellers want to team up with a successful partner.

In changing times everything changes, yet nothing changes! In other words, in order to gain and sell more from fewer opportunities, we will probably find that we will have to do more of many things including communicating and excelling in helping our customers, so it has to be asked - why didn't you do this anyway?

Possibly because you may have felt that you didn't need to go beyond your comfort zones at the time but had you done so, the consequent increase in business might have delivered great results whilst others were floundering.

That said, on to shows and exhibitions. 2012 is looking seriously good with organisers showing almost overwhelming confidence both nationally and internationally. On the interior design side various chambers have extended their hospitality for us to be their guests at their shows from Milan to Shanghai and from France to Russia as well as in the UK. We find that these shows are a great barometer of the market as a whole.

On the issue of mortgages, again, if you believe what you read you might think mortgages are virtually unobtainable. Well it's just not like that, admittedly the whole financial scene is more challenging but many would agree lending criteria had to be tightened up. We have access to "Deals of the Week" and a 100pc mortgage - but the important thing is lending criteria, affordable and safe lending, tailored to suit the borrower. Lenders do have money to lend. I'll talk more about this in weeks to come but thinking positively, "lenders have money to lend." Back to home sales - technology has revolutionised the way buyers and sellers start their moving journey, but I also believe there is a whole change coming very soon in the way estate agents will offer property. And, yes, contrary to some people's belief, homes really are selling, but I would say the 4P's need to be observed - Preparation, Presentation, Price and Promotion.

**■ If you would like to know more about upcoming design, investment, overseas property and equestrian events, or if you are a home seller who has experienced difficulty in selling or someone who is about to put their home on the market do not hesitate to give me a call on 01603 700007 or drop me an email at [hottopics@aroundthehouses.co.uk](mailto:hottopics@aroundthehouses.co.uk) to discuss the sales strategy, presentation, target market or finance on the proposed sale or purchase of your home.**

## DOWN TO EARTH

More tips on planting a hedge from garden designer **STEVE PERRETT.**



Here are a few hedges which are well worth considering:

**■ Yew (Taxus baccata)** - This is such a beautiful and versatile plant. It looks good all year round and can be used in a variety of situations. Makes a good slow growing, evergreen hedge in the 1.5 - 2.5m range.

**■ Beech (Fagus sylvatica)** - A traditional, slow growing hedge with beautiful, reflective green or purple leaves. Not evergreen but they do hang on to their copper coloured dead leaves in winter, so not completely bare. A beech hedge will look absolutely stunning if looked after. Again, in the 1.5 - 2.5m range.

**■ Western Red Cedar (Thuja plicata)** - A good looking, reliable conifer hedge which unlike Leylandii won't go berserk. Needs a couple of good clips each year. Grows to about 1.5m then stops.

**■ Aucuba japonica** - Spotted laurel is a great choice for city locations as it puts up with pollution. Grows 1.2m - 2m high.

**■ Eleagnus x ebbingei** - A good hedge for coastal locations as it puts up with salt and sand laden winds. Gives off a lovely scent and grows 2 - 2.5m high.

**■ Escallonias** - Make a good evergreen hedge with a long flowering season. 1.5 - 2m high.

Four Tips for Planting a Hedge

1. Consider what it is you want the hedge to do. Is it for security, screening an unsightly object or privacy. Different hedges serve different purposes.
2. Prepare the ground thoroughly. Ideally dig a trench 45cm wide and 30cm deep using lots of organic matter along the bottom.
3. Use a mycorrhizal fungi such as Rootgrow when planting. The fungus helps provide a secondary root system.
4. Once planted, bare root plants will need to be cut down to about 15cm from the ground or by about one third to ensure that the hedge fills out from the ground up. You don't want to be left with a bare bottom!

We provide a complete planting service so if a hedge appeals to you but don't fancy the physical exertion, we can do all of the hard work.

**■ Steve Perrett Gardening Design can be contacted at 07825 215622 or 01263 768037, [www.steveperrett.co.uk](http://www.steveperrett.co.uk)**

# When was the last time YOU ...

**Read a really good book:** "I always have a mountain of running books by my bed and I received two more for Christmas including the new book by Paula Radcliffe (my heroine) and one on nutrition for marathoners. One of the most powerful novels I have ever read is We need to talk about Kevin by Lionel Shriver, which made me think deeply about whether the mother in the book failed her son or whether the son was born evil. I re-read Erica Jong's Fear of Flying over the holidays, having read it the first time when I was a student. I really enjoyed it, and skipped over the raunchy bits of course!"

**Said I love you:** "My sons were away for two weeks skiing with their father in France and Spain. I told each of them I loved them on Christmas Day when they phoned and of course told them many times when they returned!"

**Cried:** "I shed a few tears at mile five of the Chicago marathon in October last year when I made the difficult decision to withdraw from the race. I had a hamstring injury, and despite months of training and the long journey to Chicago, I knew that pulling out was the sensible decision to make to avoid making the injury much worse. After a few weeks' rest I soon recovered however, and my



partners Chris Groves and Iain White and I are busy training for our next marathon (Rome, in March) which hopefully I will complete in under four hours (my personal trainer Colin Browning is hoping I will finish in under three hours 50 minutes which would mean I will have an age qualifying place in the London Marathon 2013.) Once I have taken part in the marathon in Rome, I am off to Boston in April for my second marathon of the year with just four weeks between the two. We are a fit bunch at Cozens-Hardy, and we are proud to be sponsoring the Norwich Triathlon in July.

**Travelled on a bus - where to and why?** "As a keen (but not very good)



This week we talked to **PHILIPPA RUDD**, a principal at Cozens-Hardy in Norwich.

**MEMORIES;** from left to right, Philippa after just completing the London marathon, with the Lotus Evora and her son Eddie Daniels and launching the triathlon business challenge with her colleagues at Cozens-Hardy.

triathlete, I try to cycle rather than drive when possible. So of course I cycle to my office in the city centre every day. One day before Christmas it was very icy so I took the bus."

**Got a new haircut - please describe!** "I had my hair cut last week by Teresa at Nigel Alexandre. She works wonders with my unruly hair and she tries not to complain when I mess up her fabulous "blow dries" the next day by going on a 20 mile run. Sorry Teresa!"

**Bought a new suit:** "Unlike my colleagues at Cozens-Hardy, I do not have to appear in court so I wear dresses rather than suits for work. I buy my clothes from Ginger in Norwich, where I find Becky and her team so helpful and I always leave there with a very special outfit (or two.)"

**Fell in love with a house:** "Last year I fell in love with a beautiful rambling period house

in Bracondale. My sons and I eventually decided not to leave our current home in Trowse as it is so practical and convenient. I can run round Whitlingham lake, swim in it in the summer months, cycle to work and my teenage sons love having sleep-over parties in our garage which has been converted into a teenagers' den."



**Said you were sorry:** "I recently won two weeks' use of a Lotus Evora at a charity auction. I said, "I'm sorry, but I'm going to have to keep this car!" Unfortunately Lotus didn't see it that way!"

**Made a mistake:** "Possibly not buying that house in Bracondale. But you have to go with your gut instinct don't you. And if you do decide to move, don't forget that we have one of the largest and most successful conveyancing teams in the region here at Cozens-Hardy."

