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ideas for the perfect period home

GLITTERING INTERIORS



Conservation Piece

Eclectic interior design has given this Georgian rectory a fabulous new lease of life

Lionel Copley first visited Hastings in East Sussex a number of years ago looking for a weekend bolt hole. Unfamiliar with the town, he says he simply pulled up and started wandering. "I spotted a lovely little cottage in the Old Town in an estate agent's window and went inside to find out more. It turned out to be one of a run of cottages built to house widows of the Battle of Trafalgar," he remembers. "They told me that there was a viewing taking place at that moment and if I hurried I could look around too, so I did. I loved it and put in an offer!"

Staying at his cottage in the Old Town, the London-based fashion and interior designer really got to know the area and the locals. "It's a proper fishing town, home to the largest beach-launched fishing fleet in Europe, and

the people living here are so down-to-earth and friendly," he explains. "There's also a strong artistic community and lots of amazing antiques shops. It's easy to see why it's so popular." Inspired by the time he was spending there, Lionel thought of opening a boutique bed and breakfast and in 2006 he bought Swan House, a 15th-century half-timbered building on one of the Old Town's most picturesque streets.

Swan House received glowing reviews and following on from its success, Lionel wanted to open a sister establishment. His property search brought him to The Old Rectory, a stately Grade II listed dwelling just a few minutes walk from Swan House. "The Old Rectory met all my requirements. It was large enough and it had a beautiful mature walled garden where guests could enjoy

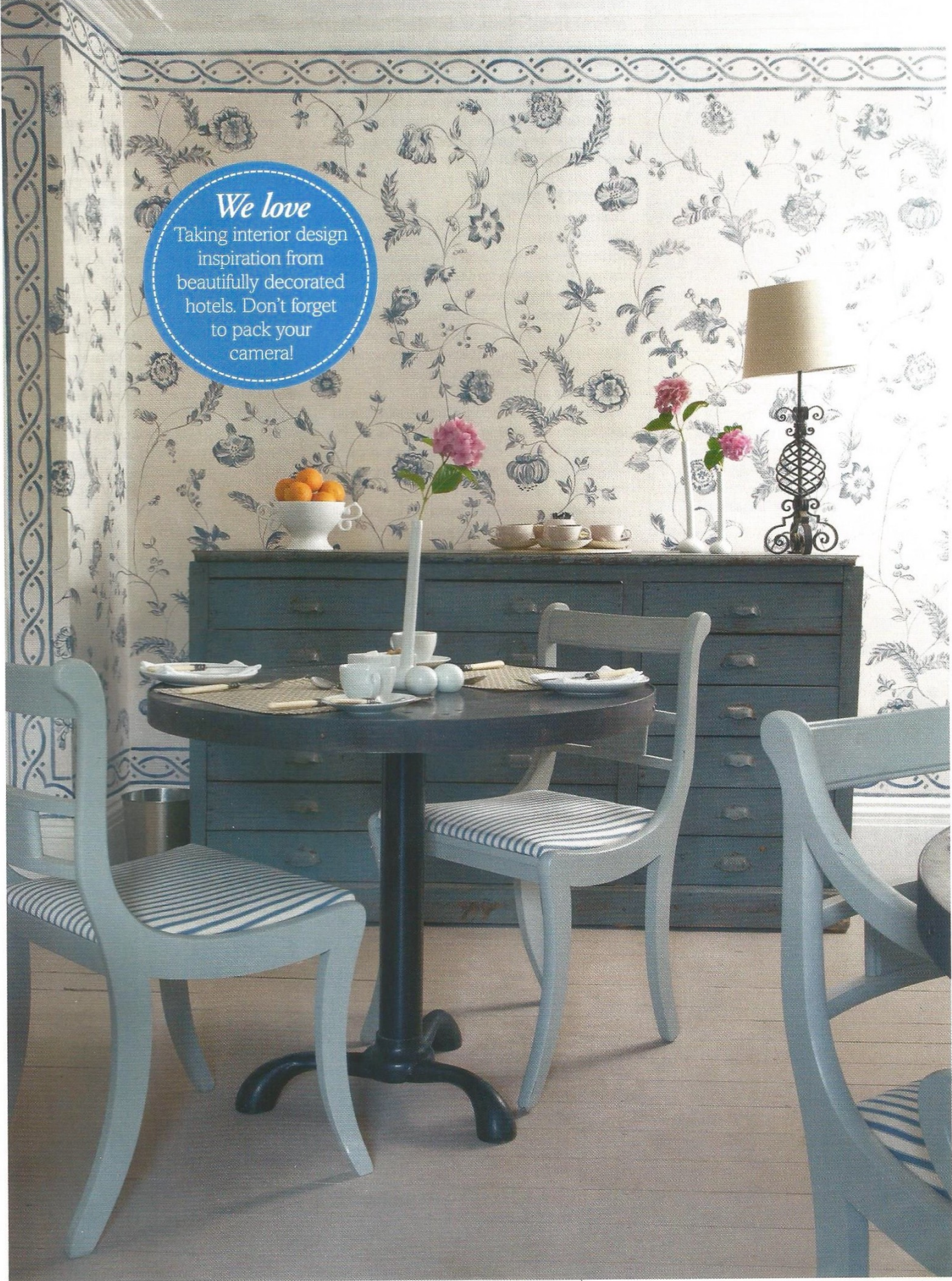
Style Tip

"Be relaxed about mixing and matching items from different eras just as Lionel has done. If you buy what you love, a scheme will naturally come together"

CERI JAMES

Editor





We love
Taking interior design
inspiration from
beautifully decorated
hotels. Don't forget
to pack your
camera!

REAL HOMES Georgian Rectory



the sunshine. Above all, I was attracted to the quirkiness and special period character of the building. I loved the grand proportions of the windows on the first floor. The whole thing was just what I had in mind."

Lionel and business partner Lindsay Wright decided they would make an offer and were disappointed when it was initially rejected. However a mutual friend was able to encourage a change of heart and the seller eventually accepted their offer after all.

Return to glory

The earliest part of The Old Rectory dates back to the 15th century. Inside the property, a huge inglenook fireplace from this period is still in use. Extensions were added to the building in the Georgian and the Victorian eras which enhanced its size and character. The place was in a sorry state when Lionel and Lindsay bought it in 2010 – half of it had been lived in but unloved, whilst the other portion had been used as a language school – but being an experienced renovator, he recognised its potential.

Because The Old Rectory is Grade II listed, Lionel and Lindsay were not allowed to make any major alterations to it. Instead they set about transforming it with his unique style of décor into an elegant and tranquil haven. All the work was carried out simultaneously and with good reason. "By the time we took possession, the first booking was already on the

horizon," Lionel says. "Deadlines were extremely tight, but everything came together beautifully in the end. If there is something this project has taught me, it is about delegating to a team of builders!"

Old & new meet

The interiors now have a sophisticated vintage look and plenty of personality, something which was important to Lionel. He explains that as a fashion designer he has travelled a great deal over the years, staying in many hotels. The experience shaped his vision, first for Swan House and then The Old Rectory. "At one time I was travelling to and from Milan on a weekly basis and I often found myself in hotels with a very corporate look, smart but far from comfortable. What I wanted to create here was the feel of a fabulous home away from home."

Most of the decorating materials and furniture were sourced locally. The antiques shops and independent quirky boutiques of the Old Town are only a stone's throw away and Lionel is a frequent visitor. He admits that two of The Old Rectory's unfinished rooms are currently filled with items of furniture that have yet to find a home, from a 1950's dentist table to a Rococo cabinet. "If I see something I like, I buy it there and then," he explains. "If I go away to think about it, I might miss out!"

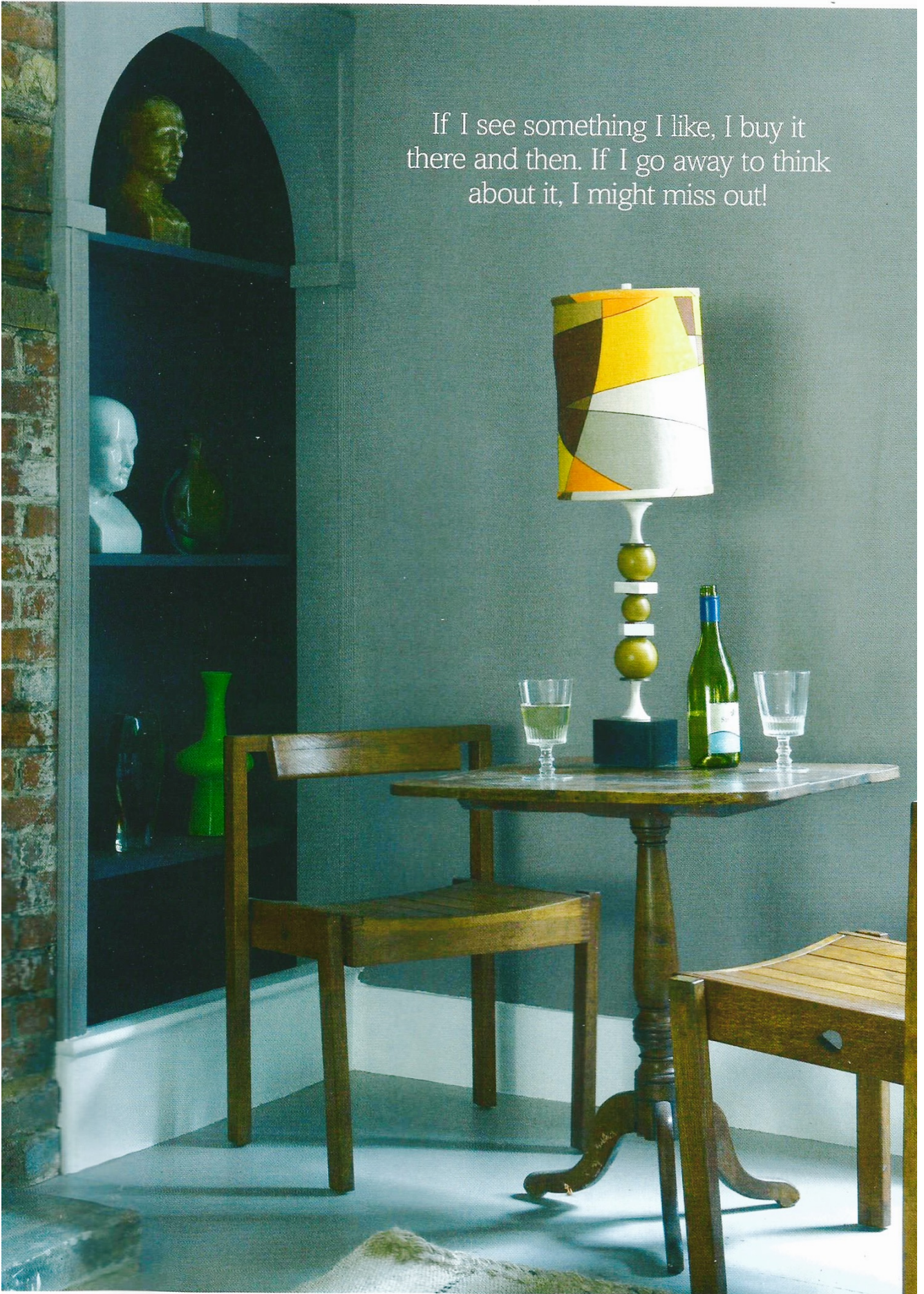
Of all the individually decorated rooms, his

Antiques galore!

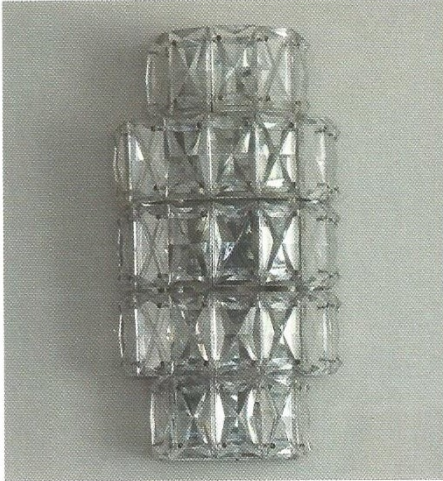
Hastings Old Town is home to many wonderful antiques shops, offering items ranging from fine furniture to inexpensive curios. You'll also find chic independent boutiques selling home accessories. Start planning your trip by clicking on visit1066country.com.



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REAL HOMES Georgian Rectory

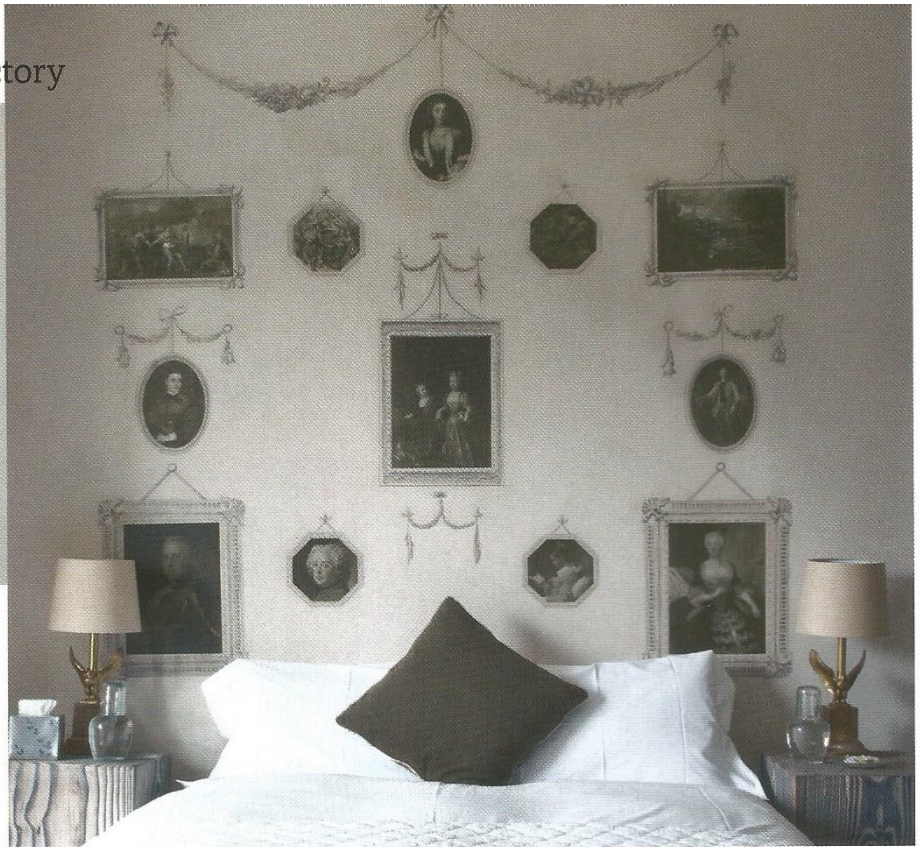


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favourite is the Crown. "My family stayed here at Christmas and I 'booked' that one for myself," he says. It is The Old Rectory's grandest room. With huge sash windows and wonderful high ceilings, it is spacious and bright and gave Lionel great scope for decorating. To begin with, he repaired and repainted the original cornicing and the beautiful ceiling rose. Then the old floorboards were refreshed with a lick of glossy grey paint. He also added a new mantelpiece made from wood in a classical style. "It's such a grand space that I felt it needed one," he says.

The walls of the Crown room were decorated by a friend and inspired by the rich interiors of Kenwood



House in Hampstead. They are spectacularly adorned with portraits 'hung' in ornate hand drawn frames, just one example of the way Lionel has brought life and fun to the property.

In the same room, the bookcase is yet another illusion. It opens up to reveal a neat space lined with old papers ranging from maps to illustrations of boy scout badges. Inside are a WC and small sink. A wonderful roll-top bath on claw feet sits outside the cupboard in the bedroom itself. This special arrangement was partly created out of necessity, Lionel explains. "My conservation officer said that the parameters of the ceiling had to remain visible, so I couldn't fit an en-suite.

This was the solution I devised."

What next?

The majority of the project is now complete. Only the two rooms which are currently filled with Lionel's finds remain unfinished. However he says that he will undoubtedly continue to tweak things at The Old Rectory even when they too are decorated. He is also sure that he will take on a new challenge. "Looking back, Swan House became a showcase for the work of local designers and The Old Rectory was a chance to work with some of them again but also to move their ideas on. Now that it is nearly complete, watch this space!"

