

BY F. 1-004

Your weekend

On Saturday in
The Magazine for
Yorkshire...



Big Interview: With the stage version about to come to Yorkshire, Pixie Lott talks about the challenges of following in Audrey Hepburn's footsteps in Breakfast at Tiffany's.

Fashion: We take a look inside the new pop-up shop which is showcasing the work of cutting-edge Yorkshire designers.



Flower Power: They attract thousands of visitors a year, so why are there fears for the future of the famous Farndale daffodils?

Perfectly Sweet: Ahead of the Good Food Show Spring Tony Patrick, otherwise known as the Macaronman, tells us why he swapped the building site for the art of French Fancies.

Food and drink: Spring recipes from chef Mike Barker.

Homes: Inside the Harrogate family home which has just won a prestigious architecture prize.



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Interview

MUM AT
HELM OF
OLD BOYS
CLUB

Busy mother Sarah-Louise Walker is shaking things up at an historic private members club with new ideas. **Catherine Scott** meets her.



Say 'private members club' to almost anyone and they will more than likely think of lap dancing or something similar.

The Leeds Club was, until recently, the oldest private members club in the city, but there wasn't a lap dancer in sight.

"People were confused about what it actually was," says the woman now at the helm of the 164-year-old establishment in Leeds city centre.

"You tell people it's a private members club and most people think one thing, lap dancing."

So it was decided to change the Leeds Club into an events venue. "We can cater for up to 400 people in 13 different event spaces, including two for 110 people."

But reinventing the historic Leeds Club wasn't enough for 35-year-old mum of one, Sarah-Louise.

This month saw the launch of The Leeds Club Kitchen, an outside catering arm of the historic brand.

"I've always been a hard worker and have spent much of my career within hospitality," explains Sarah-Louise who took over as general manager of the Leeds Club 18 months ago.

"Although I've enjoyed working for other people there was always a niggling doubt in the back of my mind that I should be taking greater control and launching my own business.

"Thankfully, after taking on the position of general manager at The Leeds Club I was encouraged by the owners to make suggestions and come up with some new and more dynamic ideas."

Not one to sit on her laurels she got to work straight away.

"After a lot of soul searching I created the business plan for a company that I felt would really

work. I approached my partners and suggested we meet with a gap in the market; taking bespoke fine dining to businesses and private clients throughout Yorkshire."

Although she was convinced her idea was a good one, she wasn't sure how it would go down with the owners.

"In some ways I was suggesting setting up in competition to our own business, but the Leeds Club was at capacity and being a grade 2 listed building there is no where to expand," explains Sarah-Louise.

Despite taking an approach that could have been seen as controversial, the partners recognised the value in taking their business to an extended audience that would require expert catering services at their homes and offices.

With start-up capital, Sarah-Louise invested in a mobile catering unit, which was purpose-fitted to meet with the diverse requirements of her prospective client base. In addition, she started to consider chefs that would have the expertise required to deliver her expectations

to the boardroom and dining room table.

"Suddenly my plans were becoming a reality and I knew I had to make this work. I had so much to do but my drive and enthusiasm kept me going. I had fantastic feedback from those I spoke to and it was so apparent that people were screaming out for good quality food that could



FINE DINING: Sarah-Louise Walker, watching her executive head chef Craig England,