

INTERIORS

YVONNE JONES
STYLE FILE

GOLD STANDARD

BRING some gleaming metallic splendour into your home with these lustrous shutters from Shutterly Fabulous (www.shutterlyfabulous.com). Gold is very much a trendy colour for 2016. Used sparingly it need not be overwhelming, as these shutters illustrate. The image shows a plain and simple room, a blank canvas, if you like, uplifted by the metallic sheen of the shutters. It's great that the shutters are serving an essential function in the room, as well as providing a design statement. I'm all for the pieces we spend money on working hard for us, so two results for the price of one is ideal. When using a statement colour, a good tip is to mirror it somewhere else in the room, for example, in this picture the lightshade provides a complementary reflective surface.



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SOFT TINTS

THE idea that it might be necessary to dampen down sunlight seems laughable given the amount of gloomy weather we've been having. Although bright summer days seem like a distant memory, they will return. In a conservatory, even winter sunlight can create extreme glare that's uncomfortable to be around. In summer, it can be unbearable. Think how quickly a car becomes suffocatingly hot on even a mildly warm day. The Window Film Company (www.windowfilm.co.uk) has a special solar control film that allows the sun to filter through pleasantly, but the tint dampens the glare. Now is the time to start thinking about jobs like these, so that when the sun starts to shine all you need do is sit back and enjoy it.

STARTING AFRESH

THE first couple of months of a new year are a good time to start thinking anew. What needs replacing? What needs updating? Of course, making changes can be pricey, so it's essential to cost each project carefully, then prioritise. One home improvement that's totally free is de-cluttering. It's amazing how much better a room can look when it's pared back. I'm not suggesting minimalism, few people can live like that, simply to evict unnecessary clobber. All too often we keep things because we no longer even notice them, not because we like them especially. Tidying up the paraphernalia that accumulates is another way of sprucing up your



home. This wooden box unit from Cox and Cox (www.coxandcox.co.uk) has handy compartments where things can be stowed away - and easily found.

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The mystery of
Shelley's Ghost

WHEN famous poet Shelley stayed at Plas Tan-Yr-Allt the story goes he was shot at by a disgruntled local, and so the tale of Shelley's Ghost was born.

Plas Tan-Yr-Allt Bed & Breakfast near Porthmadog is opening its doors next month, and guests will be able to delve in to one of the great Welsh tales while they are there.

Mark White, joint owner of the luxury bed & breakfast says of the moment he and Howard Mattingley arrived at the historic home: "It was a beautiful September afternoon. We turned into a lane and were greeted by a canopy of leaves and a massive waterfall on the right and then the house appeared on the horizon.

"We looked at each other and instantly knew it was the one we had been looking for even before we went inside."

Howard and Mark were starting to think they would never find the perfect place to set up a bed and breakfast business after viewing more than 60 properties in North Wales.

Howard says: "We were both desperate to leave the rat race in London behind but we were beginning to despair the Welsh dream would never come true.

"But then it was almost as if this home had been waiting for us to arrive. It was the last property on our list to view. It was worth waiting for."

And it's not just a property with character in a beautiful location, the house has an intriguing history surrounding the urban legend of "Shelley's Ghost".

Howard says: "Between 1812-13 the poet Shelley stayed at the house with his wife and it is here that he completed his famous epic poem Queen Mab."

But that's not the only notable thing that is supposed to have happened to the famous poet while staying at Plas Tan-Yr-Allt. Legend says he was shot at from outside the drawing room window. Howard says: "It is said that he had annoyed some of the local residents with his outspoken views and may have even owed some people money. Who knows what really happened and why but the story lives on."

A biographer of Shelley's life, Richard Holmes, suggests in his book "Shelley the Pursuit" that the truth of that night will never be uncovered.

Did it happen (wife Harriet certainly thought so at the time), or was Shelley hallucinating? Whatever the truth, the poet and his wife left the house the very next morning.

And it's not just Shelley who has been captivated by the welcoming atmosphere of the property and its serene surroundings.

The historic property is thought to be the first Regency villa in North Wales to be built by the renowned philanthropist and entrepreneur William Maddocks, who is also



► Luxury bed and breakfast Plas Tan-yr-Allt which is opening on February 1 after refurbishment. Above, the William Maddocks bedroom



credited with developing the nearby town of Porthmadog by building a cob (sea wall) to reclaim agricultural land.

Maddocks' fame led to a number of notable friends staying at the property including Elizabeth Billington, the opera singer of the day, and Miss Hilda Greaves, the aunt of the architect Sir Clough Williams-Ellis, the inspirational creator of the Italianate village Portmeirion.

The renovations took 10 months to complete and included electrical work, plumbing and a new roof on the veranda, with Howard and Mark doing most of the work themselves.

The property can now also be enjoyed by residents staying at the bed and breakfast when it opens at the beginning of next month and they are assured of a warm welcome.

Howard says: "We both want guests to feel like it's a home from home. They can relax and enjoy the



40 acre estate at their leisure. There's ancient woodland to roam through and some lovely views too.

"There's no rush for them to pack and leave, we want them to enjoy being at this special place for as long as they want to stay.

"We feel blessed to be the custodians of this amazing house. It's a responsibility but that's not a problem when you love a property as much as we do."

■ Plas Tan-Yr-Allt Bed & Breakfast officially launches on February 1, but is open now to take bookings via the website www.plastanyrallt.co.uk or by calling 01766 514591.