



Garleton Lodge, near Aberlady, East Lothian

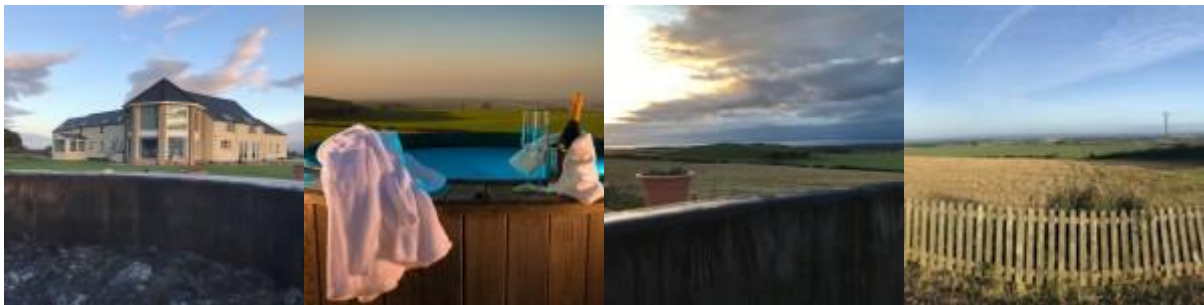
September 27, 2017

Rarely is it seen in the world of hospitality; such fluid harmony within a team; one the right hand; the other, the left. It is with such ease, that daily business at Garleton Lodge is smoothly run and expertly executed, that you may be forgiven for even noticing at all.

David and Angela Cockerton returned from life overseas with a vision and that dream has become apparent in the heart of the East Lothian countryside; much to the joy of those who live within striking distance of the magnificent conversion, which forms Garleton Lodge.

Working together, at what is their home and business, Garleton must surely be considered a success story by all those who have crossed the threshold of this amazing property.

Stepping out of the car, an amazing 360-degree view welcomed us; impossible to ignore and why would you? The wonderful sea and landscape of beautiful East Lothian and views further afield to Edinburgh and the neuk of Fife. It was a good ten minutes before we ventured any further than the photo opportunities, which surrounded us from the front lawn.

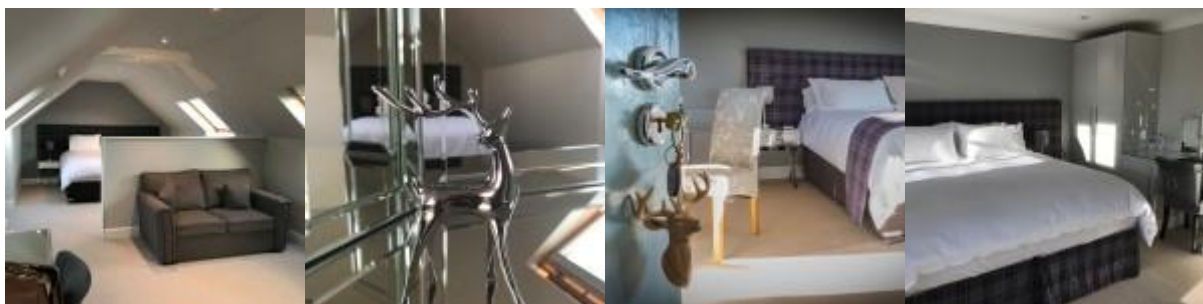


Warmly welcomed by David and eased into our new surroundings with a stunning whisky cocktail, courtesy of Angela's mixology skills, mouth-watering cooking aromas were already tempting us from the kitchen.

Keen to see all the rooms however before additional guests checked-in, it is here where my dilemma begins and around which we enjoyed much exchange and banter surrounding the classification of Garleton. Not fitting accurately, nor in my mind comfortably into any neat category as set up out by the various tourism authorities, Garleton has many facets and strings to its bow; none diluted by the other but all working to complement each other in a unique 5 star pick 'n mix creation.

The guest accommodation absolutely falls at the luxurious end of the market; carefully planned and stylishly executed, the six expansive bedrooms (2 suites) follow a comfortably simplistic theme with regards colour and style, having adopted a "Garleton Tartan", which is both subtle and apt, a whisky theme and a love of all things stag.

Each room represents a favoured whisky distillery with full notes on each and a thoughtful taster, placed in every room, introducing guests slowly to the delights of Scotland's national drink.



The bar room further promotes the spirit with an extensive book selection and a surprisingly vast choice of whiskies. What is also noticeable however is the focus on local produce; East Lothian is fast becoming acclaimed for the vast array of craft producers – a topic at the heart of the ethos at Garleton and one they are happy to support, which would become more evident during dinner.

But first to the hot tub. Who could resist the rustic charms of a bubbling, therapeutic spa, glass in hand and the best views for miles, of the sun dipping behind the horizon? Imagine enjoying the Hogmanay fireworks in Edinburgh from exactly this place! Complete relaxation had crept up on us and all was at peace with the world.

Relaxed dining is most definitely on the menu at Garleton; a moderate number of rooms has afforded the owners the luxury of allowing guests to dine at leisure, enjoying time to browse the daily changing menu, with an aperitif and freshly made amuse bouches, served up at the bar. A surprisingly extensive wine list for an establishment of this size, only further emphasized David and Angela's passion for all things food and drink, driven by a desire to offer the finest produce available.



Garleton is additionally a destination restaurant for non-residents, hosting a mix of regular diners and those looking for a suitable departure from other local establishments; Archerfield being one. Those fortunate enough to secure a table shall undoubtedly be tempted to stay in this haven of warm ambience and good cheer; there is a strong reluctance to leave.

David and Angela's many strengths lie, not least of all, in creating an environment in which, everyone feels at home. The dining room takes full advantage of the ever-present and ever-changing views; round tables (my favourite) maximizing the social side of dining; lighting and music to perfection, completing the guest experience.

Dinner spanned many hours as we chatted into the evening over a selection of courses; each meticulously thought out, with an understanding and appreciation of provenance, transferred into the preparation and cooking of each dish.

Hugely flexible, not only is there a choice of new dishes each evening, Angela shines in her ability to instinctively know her diners and preferences, speaking with a very obvious passion for everything which exits her kitchen.

Afternoon tea is a complementary option in the Garleton mix, as is a barbecue event in a specially designed BBQ hut, for more informal gatherings, in the garden – another unique experience and an option for those fortunate enough to be staying longer than one night.

David and Angela are not slowing in their dreams for Garleton moving forward; plans are in place for additional rooms, private decks and more secluded hot tubs for each room. This shall happen seemingly effortlessly as business at Garleton operates very much with the guest experience at the forefront of their minds; always.

On a practical note, Longniddry train station (a short walk) shall take guests into Edinburgh in virtually no time at all, presenting, surely the best of all worlds and affording guests so much scope with regards activity, sightseeing and dining. Of course the joys of the East Lothian golf courses is easily accessible, with multiple possibilities literally on the doorstep and special facilities for equipment storage back at the Lodge.

So back to a category; there isn't one, which exists, that would satisfactorily encompass the offering at Garleton. Each aspect is so independently deserving of special mention that I refuse to squeeze it into a classification, which would be ill fitting and undeserving of such a unique and independently excelling property.

Working perfectly as a team, David and Angela thrive on the social aspect presented to them at Garleton; each guest is a friend; made to feel absolutely welcome in this, their very special place.

Perhaps within the wider tourism industry, things should be taken back to basics to find this equilibrium, which is so present at Garleton. I personally am so glad that such places exist; challenging the norm and focusing very much on guest experience as opposed to gathering stars.

There is no category available, which would accurately capture Garleton; go, try it for yourself and leave feeling completely satisfied that you have experienced the best of Scottish hospitality.

Oh and did I mention that plans are afoot for a cookery school.....watch this space!

<http://www.garletonlodge.co.uk/>