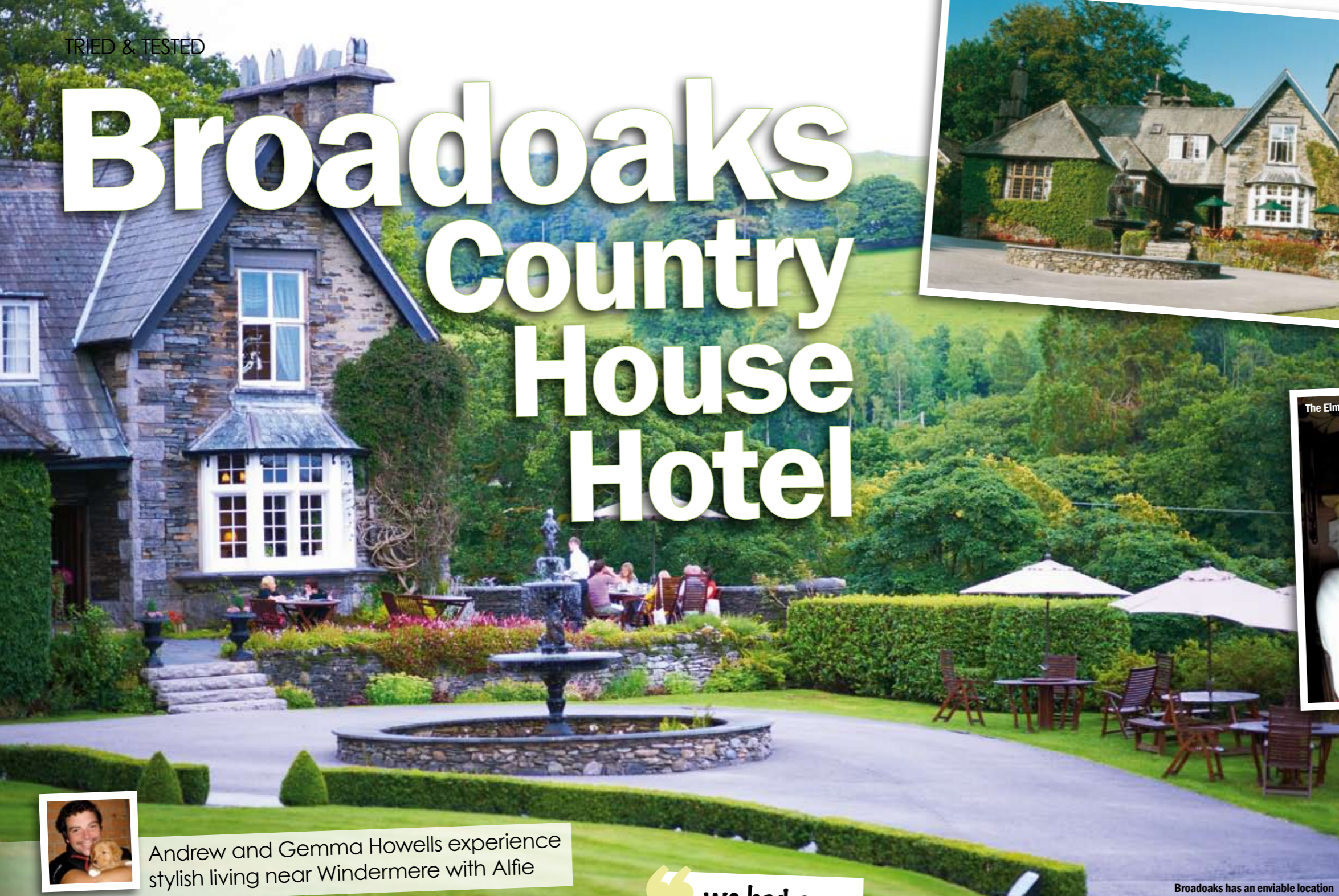


# Broadoaks Country House Hotel



only public area they weren't allowed was the restaurant.

originally built, it sits very much at its heart and is a popular party venue.

**A GRAND ENTRANCE**

A great deal has been done to maintain the building's original features and architecture and I was delighted by the winding central staircase, the oak panelled walls and the barrel-vaulted ceiling of the Music Room. Indeed, although the Music Room was added fifty years after the house was

**A TASTE SENSATION**

Although the property and its surroundings are spectacular, one of the main reasons Broadoaks is so highly rated is the food, which is prepared by the highly talented resident chef, Gareth. The menu's fresh and changes regularly - it's creative without being pretentious and didn't disappoint. I guess the

The Elm Suite, with a handcarved walnut bed



Andrew and Gemma Howells experience stylish living near Windermere with Alfie

“we had a fantastic stay and I know we'll return”

Walking holidays became popular in the 19th century and Broadoaks was built in 1836 when the Lake District was the destination of choice. Situated in Troutbeck, in seven acres of landscaped grounds, it's a spectacular Victorian property with lovely views across Windermere.

Sometimes I've found that taking a dog on holiday cramps my style. Excited by images I've seen online, I've later found that the rooms pictured are out-of-

bounds if you have a canine companion - but that's not the case at Broadoaks Country House Hotel. It's an elegant retreat where dogs are just as welcome as their owners.

**ULTIMATE LUXURY**

Having planned a romantic holiday to celebrate Gemma's 30th birthday, I was delighted by room we'd been given, the Elm Suite. The king-size bed was stylishly dressed, its immaculate linen chosen to complement the thick red carpet, attractive

antique furniture and colourful prints. And beyond I could see the ensuite with spa bath and massive overhead shower!

Overall, Broadoaks has fifteen individually designed 5-star bedrooms - these vary considerably in price, ranging from the Victorian Bijou Rooms via the Victorian Romance, Victorian Delux and Victorian Superior Rooms to the Master Garden Suites, so there's something whatever your budget.

Admittedly, Alfie, a one-year-old Nova Scotia Duck Tolling

Retriever, was more interested in the bath than the room itself but he clearly enjoyed the treats provided... a doggy bowl of tempting morsels and, naturally, a bottle of Cumbrian water. It clearly is a dog-friendly establishment.

**SITTING WITH FRIENDS**

Obviously, with so many canine guests, there have to be a few house rules but, made by the resident cockapoo Molly, they're pretty simple. Well-behaved dogs are welcome but, if you make a mess, there's a mop under the stairs! The hotel's dog-friendly approach is working because dogs were a common sight in the Lounge and Music Room where they sat while their owners relaxed with the papers or a enjoyed a drink beside the fire. In fact, the



Pamper yourself with luxury Bath House products



Broadoaks has an enviable location



**DOG FRIENDLINESS**

- ACCOMMODATION **STYLISH**
- WALKS **VARIED**
- DOG SUITABILITY **EXCELLENT**
- VALUE **GOOD**
- OVERALL **AMAZING**



Cumbria is prime walking country



We were extremely well fed and could only manage an evening walk before a night cap at the bar. One night we fancied a more relaxed pub meal instead and tried the Kirkstone Pass Inn which nestles 1500ft up the windswept fells – we found a varied selection of real ales and tasty food.

Alfie didn't miss out either because there was a doggy menu

- Slices of grilled chicken breast*
- Cubes of roast beef*
- Traditional Pedigree Chum*
- Chef's homemade gravy*
- Gravy Bones*
- Bowl of best quality dry food*
- Chew Sticks*

Alfie chose a medley of dried food with beef and gravy. If it was half as good as my beef and liver I'm not surprised the bowl was empty when we returned. The breakfasts were of the same high standard – a full English if you were hungry or cereals, pastries and yoghurt if you wanted something light.

only way I can share the range of imaginative dishes is by describing one evening's fayre –

**Starter**

*Fresh king scallops with shallot puree and warmed black-peppered tangerines*

**Main course**

*Broadoaks ravioli filled with Mozzarella cheese, marjoram, basil and garlic, resting on a bed of sautéed Porcini and Cep mushrooms, drizzled with a roasted red pepper coulis*

**Dessert**

*Vanilla crème brulee, a homemade shortbread biscuit and fresh berries*

If you fancied something more unusual then how about skillet pancakes and bacon? Everything is sourced locally sourced and it is abundantly clear in the end result.

**RAMBLING ROUND AMBLESIDE**

Situated just a few miles from

Lake Windermere, the hotel is in ideal dog-walking country. Although you can drive to the lake, we walked three miles across the peak into Ambleside then explored the many pathways that lead around the water's edge. The terrain varies quite widely so you can choose a route that suits – it all depends





on how much of a challenge you want, what the weather's like and how hearty a breakfast you had that morning!

I picked up a laminated route card from reception – there are several walks available. Although the cards are a helpful guide (and ours was sufficient while we were there because the weather was amazing) I'd normally use a map and compass. Walking along the winding country lanes, we enjoyed spectacular views of the lake and its paddle steamers and, in the distance, trains puffing along the valley. Sometimes the route led through fields with cattle so we had a lead at the ready. Indeed,

there were several interesting moments especially when a herd of cows appeared less than happy by Alfie's presence. I still don't understand why Gemma didn't pose so I could take a picture. After all, it's how I earn a living!

After teasing Alfie with the ducks, we enjoyed a quick bite at a cafe on Windermere then headed towards Rydal Water via the stepping stones along the river. It's an excellent place if your water-mad dog wants to cool off on a sunny day. After he'd played a while we headed back through the woods above Ambleside and past a waterfall. Once we were clear of the trees,

we scrambled to the summit of Wansfell Pike. One of the world's most renowned mountain writers Bill Birkett remarked that 'Wansfell is to Ambleside what St. Pauls is to London'.

Sadly, the ascent's proved so popular that erosion's a problem and, in certain places, it's been restored using blocks that resemble a staircase. Nevertheless, it's worth the climb because the views are so rewarding, especially on a clear day when you can see right across the national park.

We then ambled downhill along tracks like Nanny Lane until we reached the Mortal Mann Inn – its sign reads,

*'Oh Mortal Man that lives by bread  
What is it makes thy nose so red?  
Thou silly fool that looks so pale,  
T'is drinking Sally Birkett's ale.'*

Now you know you're just a few hundred yards from a welcoming smile, a G&T on the veranda and a spa bath - what a way to finish the day.

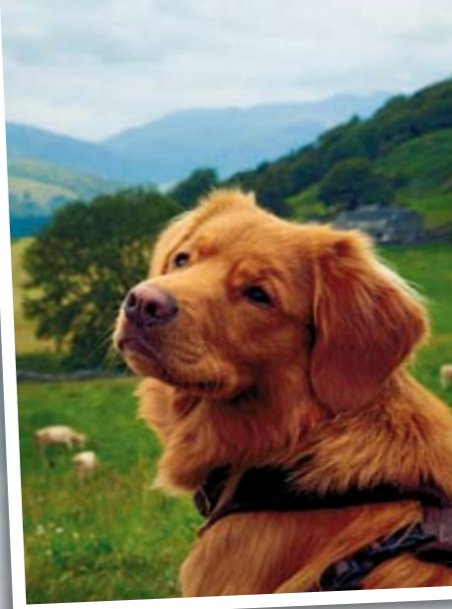
**IDEAL HOLIDAY DESTINATION**

Broadoaks specialises in romantic weekend and midweek breaks and is superb if you enjoy outdoor pursuits such as walking, golfing and fishing. If exercise is an important part

of your routine, you can take advantage of Broadoak's guest membership of the Macdonald Old England Sap in Bowness which has a fitness suite, swimming pool and extensive facilities, including sauna, steam room and beauty salon.

**WORTH EVERY PENNY**

Considering the quality of the food, the standard of the accommodation, the helpfulness of the staff and the beauty of the location, and the fact that it's so dog-friendly, I can't fault the cost. There was the occasional blip – a wedding meant we were rather neglected one morning, but it was extremely busy at the time



so we didn't complain. Overall though, we had a fantastic stay and I know we'll return when the colonial cabins they're building in the grounds are ready.



**FACT FILE**

**PRICE** Costs from £60 per person per night based on a couple sharing midweek, bed and breakfast. Special Christmas and New Year deals are available.  
**SUITS** Those wanting a luxurious holiday in spectacular countryside.  
**CONTACT** Tel 01539 445 566 or visit [www.broadoakscountryhouse.co.uk](http://www.broadoakscountryhouse.co.uk)