

travel

THEY SAY staying home is the new going out, and this can apply to holidays, too. We're all for hopping on planes or driving miles in order to "get away from it all" but **Jennifer Cosgrove** travelled for less than an hour and discovered a regal village, a country retreat and great food, all just a stone's throw from Dundee.

So near and yet so far

IT WAS my mother's birthday, so where better to take her than the picturesque village of Falkland, which is dominated by Falkland Palace, once the place favoured by the Young Mary, Queen of Scots, where the Stuart monarchs stayed for hunting. Blessed with some late autumn sunshine, the grey stone buildings still carry signs of their royal past, encircling the impressive Bruce Fountain, which bears red statues of Scotland's rampant lion.

Before visiting the village's main attraction, we popped into the family-owned Kind Kyttock's Kitchen, which can be found just off the old market place on Cross Wynd. A friendly establishment, it serves homemade soups, salads, scones, pancakes and preserves as well as afternoon tea.

Since we were due to have dinner in the evening, we had a light lunch of soup — which comes with delicious home-baked soda bread — followed by tea and pancakes. Named after the heroine a poem by Scot William Dunbar poem, Kind Kyttock's also doubles up as shop, selling cards, ceramics, crafts and kitchen ware and is a member of the United Kingdom Tea Council's Tea Guild. First opened by the Dalrymples in 1970, the tea room's reputation has grown and is now being run by the next generation of the family.

Afterwards, we took a peek inside some of the local shops, including the Cottage Craft Centre — a delightful emporium selling everything from cookware and jewellery to soaps and fashion accessories — and The Violin Shop which, as expected, sells violins and other antiques.

It was a perfect day to see Falkland Palace and its garden, with warm sunshine setting off the Renaissance stonework, framed by gold and crimson leaves. The only royal palace in the care of the National Trust for Scotland, visitors enter through the gatehouse and walk briefly through the courtyard to reach the bottom of a spiral staircase leading to rooms once inhabited by kings and queens.

Built by James IV and James V between 1501 and 1541, Falkland Palace was a country residence of the Stuart monarchs of Scotland for over 200 years. The east range of the structure is now ruined, after being accidentally destroyed by fire in 1654 when Oliver Cromwell's troops were garrisoned there during the Civil War. The south range still stands and there are reconstructions of the King and Queen's bedrooms in the east range.

The impressive array of portraits are striking, and volunteer guides dressed in period costume are on hand to provide historical detail and interesting facts about the building and its inhabitants over the years.

The Chapel Royal is one of the most impressive rooms, with its original interior and beautiful painted ceiling. Still used for service every Sunday, it is also a popular wedding venue. The ante chapel contains the regimental colours of the Scots Guards and an icon made by members of the Polish Airborne Forces stationed at Falkland during the Second World War.

Following on from the chapel is the tapestry gallery, which was originally the processional route from the king's apartments, located in the now-ruined east range. The original tapestries are no longer there, but 17th Century Verdure hunting tapestries decorate the walls and an appeal is underway to conserve them due to light damage they have suffered.

At the end of the corridor, another impressive staircase leads to the old library where Mary Stuart used to read. The painted ceiling carries the crests of generations of the Crichton Stuarts who have over the years held positions of keepers of the palace. John Crichton Stuart, the 3rd Marquess of



Above — Falkland Palace; below — Craigsanquhar Hotel.



Bute, began the palace's restoration in the 19th Century but sadly, his death in 1900 prevented restoration of the east range. In the library, you can see paintings and photographs of the family who have kept watch over the palace.

It is possible to walk out on to the ruined east range and enter the King's Room, as reconstructed by architect Schomberg Scott, demonstrating how the royal apartments would have appeared. It contains an interesting high chair the guide explained would be used to discipline a young royal. If the child was misbehaving, the maid would not be allowed to raise a hand, but the youngster could be put into the chair which, if enough wiggling was done, would fall, causing injury!

Above this room is the Queen's Room, which was decorated and furnished by the present keeper, Ninian Crichton Stuart and the National Trust for Scotland in 1987. Hanging above the entrance to the room is Mary Queen of Scot's death mask.

From the reconstructed rooms, you are led out into the garden with its sweeping green lawns, colourful shrubbery and trees. The flowers were covered with butterflies and the autumn foliage just stunning. There is also an orchard, which is one of the largest in the care of the National Trust for Scotland.

Also in the castle grounds is the oldest tennis court in the world, built for James V in 1539, where his daughter the young Mary Stuart played. The tennis game on these

courts was known as real tennis or royal tennis. Unlike the courts at Wimbledon, the surrounding walls and gallery were integral to the game. Lawn tennis was introduced in 1870 and only then did it become necessary to distinguish between the two.

We had a very pleasant afternoon, so it's difficult to understand why the Queen hasn't ever paid Falkland Palace a visit.

From Falkland we headed back towards Cupar and our evening retreat Craigsanquhar House Hotel and Estate, near Logie, just 6 miles from St Andrews.

Described as a hidden gem, Craigsanquhar means "sanctuary on a hill" and the four-star hotel is well placed amongst 36 acres of tranquil gardens and countryside. The grey stone mansion house was the former home of the Spens family of Lathallan, whose ancestry can be traced back to King Robert III of Scotland and King Edward III of England.

Owned by American Tom McClendon for the past twenty years, Craigsanquhar is managed by John Douglas and, in keeping with our royal theme for the day, we were in good hands, as John's career has included a fourteen-year spell aboard the QE2, during which time he looked after the Queen and royal family!

Inside the opulent mansion are thirteen bedroom suites, furnished with solid wood four poster beds, rich drapes, chaise-lounges and chandeliers and complete with bath robes and beautiful views. We stayed in the Thomson suite (apt for a DC Thomson journalist!) while my parents were in the Garden suite, so named because of its superior views.

Just beyond the house itself are newly-built self-catering luxury lodges, which can sleep up to eight and offer perfect seclusion. Decorated by a top US interior designer, they have chestnut floors, French doors, landscaped patios, outdoor fireplaces and open plan living and dining areas.

It's easy to see why Craigsanquhar is a popular wedding venue, with the old coach house at the back of the mansion converted into a function suite, the picturesque backdrop for outdoor ceremonies and an impressive internal staircase which is perfect for the photo album.

After settling into our rooms and exploring the grounds, we enjoyed some pre-dinner drinks in the hotel's bar before taking our seats in the award-winning Capercaille restaurant, run by head chef Billy Thomson — after whom my suite was named.

With 25 years' experience and 10 years at Craigsanquhar, Billy uses the best of Scotland's produce for his dishes, which include roasted white onion and thyme soup, wild garlic and parsley risotto with parmesan shavings, peppered loin lamb on wilted greens with marquette potatoes and poached lobster on herb fettuccini with prawn bisque.

Our party enjoyed starters such as the tasty pan-fried crab cakes with champagne and dill veloute, open ravioli of juicy langoustines, smoked salmon, lemon sole and herb oil and delicious mains including grilled beef with a hair of pheasant roulade, fried quail egg, parisienne potato and a rich port jus and also pan-fried duck breast with dauphinoise potatoes, crispy duck mousse ball with a blackcurrant jus, accompanied by a full-bodied Australian Shiraz.

Desserts included a melt-in-the-mouth warm chocolate pudding with glazed cherries and white chocolate and vanilla ice cream and the delightfully fruity mango pavlova, clotted cream and mango airpuma followed by coffee and tablet.

It truly was a weekend to remember and the best thing is it's so close, we can do it all again whenever we like!



Desmond Carrington as he is now.

Desmond's an all-time great

by Jack McKeown

"AND NOW, live from home in Perthshire," is how Desmond Carrington begins his weekly broadcasts for Radio 2, which have been going for 30 years.

Today, the 85-year-old DJ will be turning back the clock and restaging his very first show. The former actor, who lives on a farmhouse near the Ochils, was originally told his show was to run for three months only.

But three decades later, Carrington — who has picked up celebrity followers including Pulp's Jarvis Cocker — is celebrating with a show that recreates the playlist of his original broadcast.

Tracks including Duke Ellington's *Satin Doll*, the Beach Boys' *Good Vibrations*, Peter Sarsted's *Frozen Orange Juice*, and *Some Enchanted Evening* by Rosemary Clooney and Frank Sinatra will brighten up the airwaves tomorrow, just as they did one October evening in 1981.

Born in May 1926, Carrington worked as

an actor for much of his career, appearing in theatre and on television where he became best known as Dr Anderson in the ITV show *Emergency* — Ward 10.

His *All Time Greats Show* ran every Sunday from 1981 until 2004, when it was replaced by *The Music Goes Round* and moved to Tuesdays. The show now has its home on Friday evenings.

He closed his first broadcast in 1981 with the words: "Funnily enough I have felt a little bit today like Roy Plomley must have felt all those years ago when he sat down to do the first programme of *Desert Island Discs* — you don't know what it's going to lead to."

Three decades later he has this to add: "Well, I certainly didn't think it would lead to 30 years of weekly broadcasts and some 1500 programmes. I'm so very grateful to BBC Radio 2 and to my many listeners who have always been supportive and involved in the vast range of music — which is still going round."



Desmond spins some discs 'back in the day'.

travel facts

FOR MORE about Craigsanquhar Hotel and Estate, call (01334) 653426 or visit craigsanquhar.com. Bookings are now being taken for Christmas and New Year, with accommodation and food packages available. Falkland Palace and Garden is open to the public between March 1 and October 31. Admission prices apply. Visits outside these times for pre-booked groups by arrangement. Website: exploringfife.co.uk

books in brief

The Ugly Sister by Jane Fallon

ABIGAIL ATTWOOD has for a long time felt inferior to big sis Caroline, aka supermodel Cleo, so to receive an invitation for a summer-long catch up with her and the family is surprising, to say the least.

And although she has doubts, after prompting from daughter Phoebe, she accepts.

Very quickly, however, what with Cleo's condescending behaviour, her deepening feelings for brother-in-law Jon, and her ever-constant sense of self-failure, Abi concludes the invitation was a huge mistake.

Jane Fallon's fourth novel reveals the inferiority complexes sometimes felt by second female siblings, albeit in extreme scenarios.

The somewhat predictable yet satisfying tale reveals the true Ugly Sister, and although it's not rocket science, it is a very good read.

The Ugly Sister by Jane Fallon is published as a trade paperback by Penguin, priced £7.99. Available now.

The Instructions by Adam Levin

YOU REALISE there is something very different about this book from the outset. The heft of the thing is what first stands out — weighing in as it does at 1,030 pages.

It is a work of some arrogance, not only in its size but in its protagonist, 10-year-old Gurion Maccabee.

Yes, it is a pre-teen delinquent who guides us through this epic tome, which tells the story of just four days in his manic life, building to a violent rebellion.

Gurion's bad behaviour has led to him being banished to the Cage, reserved for the worst pupils at his Jewish school.

But he has fallen in love with Eliza June Watermark — who is not only not in the Cage, but is also a non-Jew.

And Gurion, who is obsessed with the works of author Philip Roth, may or may not be the messiah, The Instructions being his very own book of scriptures.

The Instructions by Adam Levin is published in hardback by Canongate Books, priced £20. Available now.

Liesl & Po by Lauren Oliver

LAUREN OLIVER'S first books *Before I Fall* and *Delirium* have both been best-sellers, but this is her first novel for children.

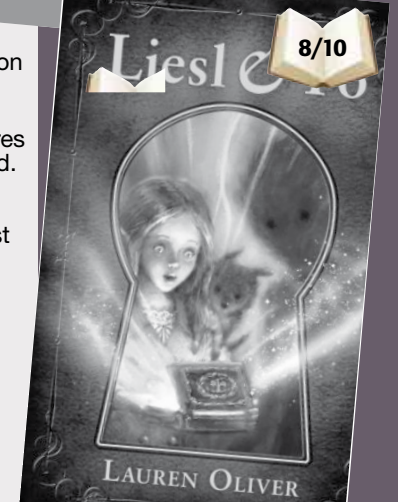
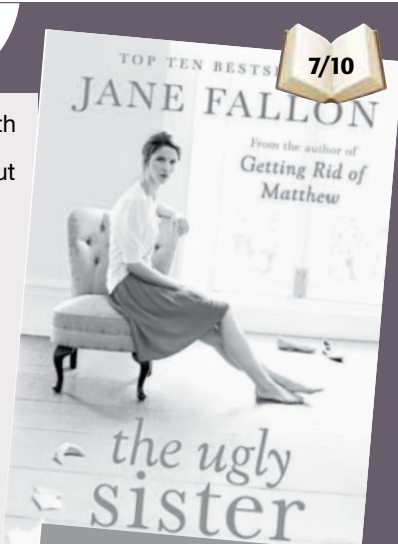
Liesl Morbower is forced to live in the attic by her wicked stepmother. On the night her father Henry dies, she is visited by a ghost called Po and his pet, Bundle. Po helps Liesl to escape so she can have a final chance to say goodbye to her father.

On their journey, they meet Will, servant to the evil town Alchemist. One night, exhausted, he mixed up the night's deliveries. One was Henry's ashes, the other a very powerful magic potion, and now he is on the run.

There are plenty of villains, chases and fairytale adventures to keep the reader entertained. What makes this book even more special is that it was written by Oliver after her best friend died.

This is a beautifully written book about loss, family, friendship and discovery — and the illustrations add a touch of magic, too.

Liesl & Po by Lauren Oliver is published in hardback by Hodder & Stoughton, priced £9.99. Available now.



Twelfth Night at Perth Theatre

theatre review by Jennifer Cosgrove

THE NEW season at Perth Theatre opened on an unseasonably sweltering evening, more akin to a midsummer night than the Twelfth Night.

Historically, January 6 — on the eve of Epiphany — was a feast of fools, when the world was turned upside down and nothing was as it seemed; when servants and masters swapped clothes and roles were reversed. From this chaos, a new year emerged.

Perth Theatre's new creative director Rachel O'Riordan sets her production of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* in 1920s Scotland, when war, love and loss is still fresh in people's minds and the world has gone through a cataclysmic change.

It is clear much thought has been put into the period costumes, and Diego Pitarch's stage design does not disappoint, with its shipwrecked quality — complete with sweeping staircase and driftwood piano — and numerous doors, which are used to amusing effect.

An impressive storm rumbles and thunders to begin the play, demonstrating from the outset good use of lighting and sound. Noises of waves, seagulls and birdsong throughout add a subtle dimension to the performance.

There is peace when the play's heroine — or hero — Viola (Laura O'Toole) is pulled almost drowned from a fierce tempest. This is followed by more after-storm calm, introducing us to the love sick duke Orsino (Martin Ledwith) who is desperately seeking the favour of rich countess Olivia (Samara MacLaren) accompanied by jazzy Cole Porter-style piano music composed and performed by Conor Mitchell as Curio.

At once, the quiet is blown away by Steven McNicoll as Sir Toby Belch, Olivia's drunken and uproarious kinsman. In places,

he is too voluminous, but his performance provides the Dionysian comedy required to dilute the "plague" of love engulfing many other characters.



Left to right — Karen Traynor (Maria), Steven McNicoll (Sir Toby Belch), Michael Moreland (Fabian) and Tom Marshall (Malvolio).

Karen Traynor is a joy to watch as Maria, Olivia's witty maid, delivering her lines assuredly and with zest. She has a powerful stage presence and fully complements Sir Toby's towering loudness.

From the moment DUBLINER Laura O'Toole takes to the stage as Viola's male alter-ego Cesario she is engaging, pronouncing her speeches with an emotional force and clarity that is sadly not matched by her long-lost twin brother Sebastian (Killian Burke).

Tom Marshall as Malvolio is pleasingly pompous, delivering his musings over Olivia's apparent love for him with dryness. His appearance in the Scots version of yellow stockings worn cross-gartered has the desired reaction with the audience.

Sir Andrew Aguecheek (John Paul Hurley) proves more of a fool than the real clown Feste (Andy Hockley) with his garish outfits and over-excitable manner.

His best scene is the well-choreographed "duel" with Cesario, when both weaklings are attempting to fight one another with over-sized swords. Hockley's performance as the clown is commendable and his singing voice is strong and most effective a cappella.

As Olivia, Samara MacLaren, begins the play with a sense of command but as is often the case with Shakespeare's women when the "plague" of love enters the equation, the colour of her clothes change from the black — in which she mourned the death of her brother — to flowers and velvet, and her portrayal of a frustrated lover becomes diluted.

The performance of Martin Ledwith as Orsino is disappointing. His delivery is too laid back and lacks the emotion conveyed so well by some of his fellow players.

Aside from a few hasty lines, it is a well-paced production. O'Riordan should be commended for choosing to open her first season at Perth Theatre with such a classic piece of theatre. In many ways, it is a bold move as it's arguably a sad fact that Shakespeare is becoming less accessible as the years progress, the school curriculum develops and tastes alter.

Although peppered with mixed performances, *Twelfth Night's* production, design and stylish execution are sure signs there will be adventure and ambition aplenty this season at Perth.