

# New beginnings

Explore the seaside celebrity hideaway of Sandsend – a small village where big plans are afoot, says Jo Haywood

**N**ext time you're paddling in the sea at Sandsend, skimming stones across the waves towards Whitby, look closely at the willowy blonde next to you. No, it's not sunstroke, it really is Uma Thurman building a sandcastle.

And who's that bounding into the sea like a leggy Labrador in an unfeasibly small bikini? Why, it's Elle Macpherson practising her front crawl before nipping into the Sandside Café for a cheese and onion pasty.

Miami beach? Maybe. Bondi beach?

Perhaps. But Sandsend beach? Come on, pull the other one, it's got shells on.

Yes, it sounds far-fetched, but the discreet, unfazeable folk of this small seaside village regularly play host to Hollywood big-hitters (including Uma), supermodels (Elle Macpherson stayed for the hunting season) and royals (the Duchess of Kent can often be found in the valley) without batting an eye.

And they could soon find even more celebrities queuing up for a loaf at Sandsend Stores and knocking back a latte at the Wits End Café when the Skelwith Group, a York-based

development company, opens its new £30 million, five-star hotel at Raithwaite Hall next summer.

The 42-bedroom spa hotel, which will be marketed nationally and internationally as a luxury holiday destination, will be a stylish sister for the group's other major project, the £100 million Flaxby Country Club on the outskirts of York.

But there is still lots of work to be done. Raithwaite Hall, once home to the multi-millionaire shipping magnate William Headlam who bequeathed the entire 80-acre estate to his nurse when



The beach at Sandsend



Elle Macpherson



Duchess of Kent

**The Mulgrave Estate**

➤ Mulgrave Castle in Sandsend is home to Constantine Edmund Walter Phipps, 5th Marquess of Normanby, his wife Nicola Shulman and their children Lady Sibylla, John, Earl of Mulgrave, and Lord Thomas.

➤ The marquess's father served briefly as a Lord-in-Waiting (a whip in the House of Lords) and was Lord Lieutenant of the North Riding. Among previous incumbents were a Tory Lord Privy Seal, a Liberal politician and a Home Secretary.

➤ There were two previous castles on the estate before the third, and current, castellated mansion was built by order of Lady Catherine Damley, the illegitimate daughter of King James II.

➤ The property passed to the Phipps family in 1718 when the duchess's daughter, Lady Catherine Annesley, married William Phipps.

➤ Supermodel Elle Macpherson took out a lease on the Mulgrave estate – considered one of England's finest shooting estates – in 2003 for the four-month hunting season. The agreement included the right to stay in the family's ancestral home.



Sendsend village from the beach

he died in 1991, is in a sorry state of repair after years of neglect. 'Very little of it is salvageable,' said Ben Pilgrim of the Skelwith Group as we picked our way gingerly through debris-strewn rooms that looked as though they were held together by dust and cobwebs. 'But this is a sensational location with immense potential.'

Sendsend is indeed sensational. Just two miles north of Whitby and a stone's throw from its nearest neighbour, the hilltop village of Lythe, this Yorkshire seaside haven is a gem of the highest quality (let's just hope Uma doesn't tell

Elizabeth Taylor or she'll want to buy the place and have it mounted on a platinum band).

Dissected by the towering presence of The Riggs, a great chunk of land that almost pushes the road into the sea, the village is sliced through again on either side by Estbek and Sandbeck, two meandering watercourses that provide a home for numerous ducks and safe paddling for numerous children.

There are no amusement arcades, fun pubs, high street chains or helter-skelters, but there is still plenty to do. The entire village is sandwiched snugly

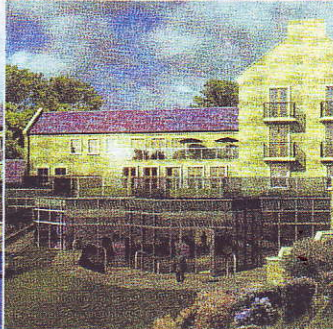
between the Cleveland Way and the National Park with a glorious, child-friendly beach at one edge and dense woodland – part of the extensive Mulgrave Estate – at the other. So, when you're not building sandcastles and exploring rockpools, you can hike in the woods (they're open to the public on Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday from June to April), surf, hunt, fish or follow the North Sea Trail up the coast.

Modern Sandsend is wonderfully peaceful and relaxed – the most vexed you will get is if they run out of fresh crab for the sandwiches before you

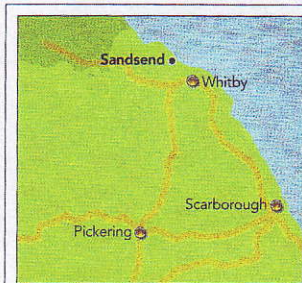
COASTAL LIFE



Sandsend village



Artist impressions of renovations at Raithwaite Hall



Location, location, location

Sandsend is two miles north of Whitby on the A174 coast road. There is a large pay and display car park at the Sandbeck end of the village below the old railway station and free spaces running along the length of the beach at the Estbek end (although they do get full rather quickly when the weather is good).

There are regular buses through the village heading to Middlesbrough and Whitby. Details and up-to-date timetables can be found at [www.northyorktravel.info](http://www.northyorktravel.info) or by phoning Traveline on 0870 608 2608.

Walkers should get a copy of the OS Explorer OL27 map. For details of the North Sea Trail, visit [www.northseatrail.co.uk](http://www.northseatrail.co.uk). And if you would like to know more about the Cleveland Way, visit [www.nationaltrail.co.uk](http://www.nationaltrail.co.uk).

reach the front of the queue – but the village began among smoke and grime as the hub of the local alum industry.

Estbek House, now a grade II listed fine dining restaurant with rooms, was built in the 18th century to house the manager of the alum works, but the workers themselves were forced to live in much more dire straits, exhausted and starving as they struggled from one pay day to another, often with many months in between.

Thankfully, there is little chance of modern visitors going hungry. The village has fine restaurants in the guise of Woodlands and Estbek, good pub grub at The Beach Hotel and The Hart Inn and delicious café fare at Wits End, the newly established Woodland Deli and Sandside.

There is also Sandsend Stores, which is something of a local institution. It was run until very recently by Dougie and Irene Raine, who bought the shop in 1976 and transformed it from a shabby, rather rundown affair into a moneyspinning store that rejected run-of-the-mill supermarket goods in favour of top-of-the-range, exclusive lines.

Add to this the attractions of The Healing Touch holistic therapy shop and the Turnstone Gallery and that is pretty much your lot in terms of spending opportunities in Sandsend. But that is very much part of its charm. A visit to this Yorkshire coast village is not about spending money, it's about spending time with your family and friends in one of the most beautiful bays in the country. ☺

Do you love Sandsend?

Tell us why at [yorkshire.greatbritishlife.co.uk](http://yorkshire.greatbritishlife.co.uk).

