

QUICK GETAWAY

# FANCY ESCAPING COMMUNICATION AT HUMBER VALLEY..? COURSE YOU DO

HumberValley:  
Hull, it ain't...

**O**K, OK, I know what you're thinking. 'Canada? As a destination for a quick getaway? Have you gone mad, Blackhurst? Have you spent the last month furtively sniffing marker pens and talking to imaginary fairies?' Well, all I ask is that you swallow your bile and dampen your vitriol for a moment because, after reading what lies ahead, you'll need to imbibe huge quantities of a noxious solvent yourself to suppress your desire to jump on the very next plane.

First, the preliminaries. You might think of a flight to Canada as a 12-hour leviathan coloured by drinking vats of cooking wine to numb the pain of a brace of Adam Sandler films, but the flight from Gatwick to Deer Lake – on the eastern tip of Newfoundland – takes a mere five hours. Add to that the ten-minute turnaround at the airport and 20-minute transfer to Humber Valley and it makes a grand total of five and a half hours. Roughly the same time it takes to travel to Cyprus. And though Cyprus has a unique charm, when placed against Humber Valley it looks like a weed wilting in the shadow of a gigantic sunflower.

And when I say gigantic, I mean it. Newfoundland – or *newfnland*, as the locals pronounce it – is bigger in area than the UK yet contains only 500,000 inhabitants, which puts a whole new spin on the ethos of a quick getaway. Usually, this feature involves 'getting away' from the UK by plunging straight into the helter-skelter city life of a Rome or Paris. And although that is technically away, you are still rooted to home by the international roaming on your mobile phone, or the scores of British newspapers that litter the news-stands. There is no danger of that at Humber Valley.

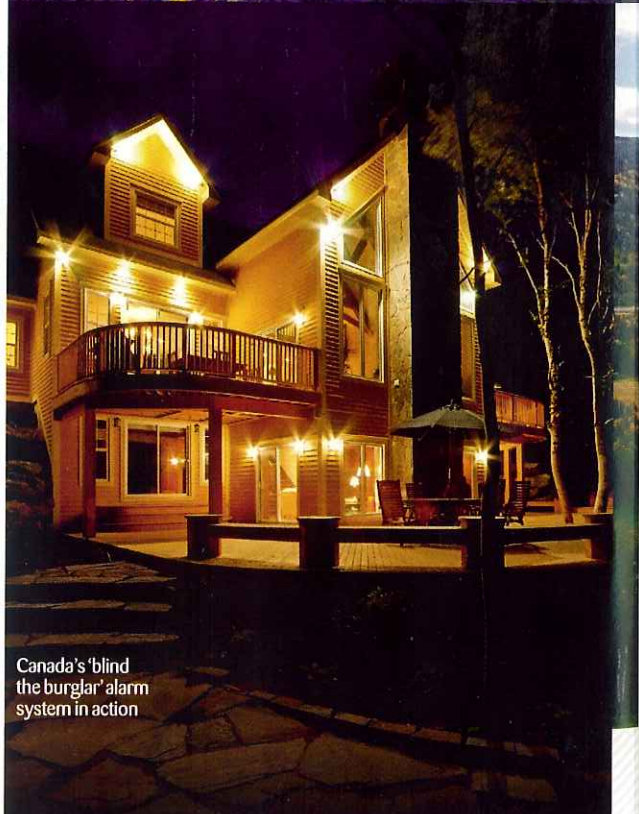
As we drive along the highway alongside the deep blackness of Deer Lake, our mobiles show no signal, the daily press is an afterthought and our only focus is the great outdoors. Which is a strange feeling because between us – GP Publisher Dan Crouch, Commercial Manager Sifa and my good self – our knowledge of the outdoor lifestyle is limited to sneaking into the woods for a crafty fag in between lessons at school.

Thank God then, for Brian Dobbin, the head honcho of Newfound Property. Mindful of the fact that luxury is almost a prerequisite in these times, he's created a dichotomy that allows even the most urban of souls to shake away the debris of city life and plunge into the woods and beyond. So we do. Our entire first day is spent sat in a hot tub on the decking of our chalet, drinking weak lager and roaring gluttonous laughter across the valley and, hopefully, all the way back to GP Towers (*where your P45 awaits you – Ed*).

We couldn't help it really, for the chalet was definitely more mansion than Butlins. Six bedrooms, two living rooms and the aforementioned hot tub all wrapped up in a package of huge leather sofas, bespoke wooden flooring and an eye for detail unseen in these parts since Wayne Gretzky hung up his skates.

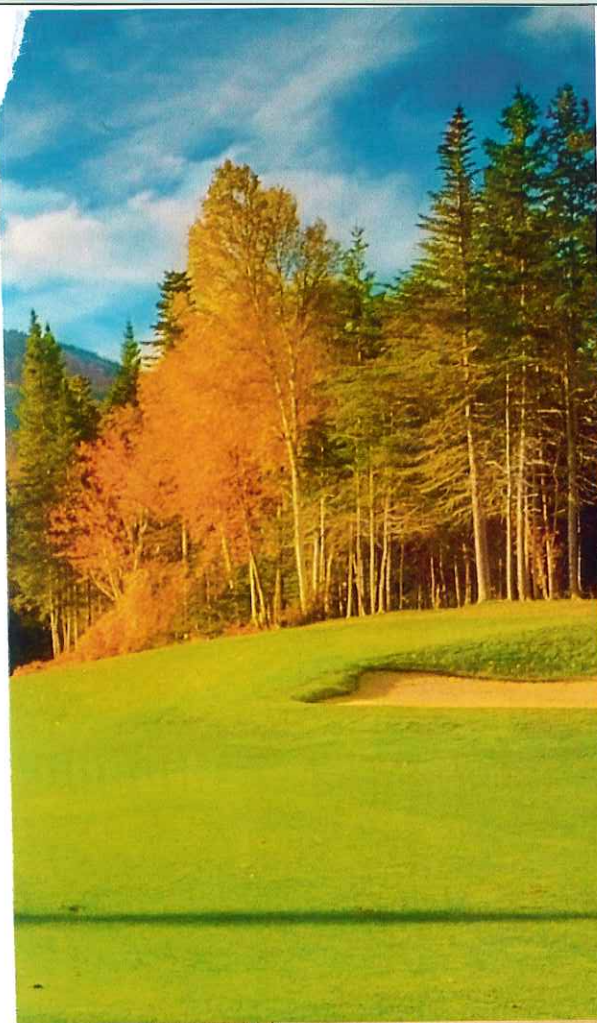
Emerging, prune-like yet content, we thought it time to check out the River Course, and who better to play with than Brian and course designer Doug Carrick. "I've designed courses in some spectacular locations," says Doug, as Brian puts a glass of vodka and cranberry on my buggy, "but Humber Valley will take some beating."

More often than not, courses carved from forests or planted on the sides of mountains will rely heavily on the



Canada's 'blind  
the burglar' alarm  
system in action





'Seen any fish..?'

'Nah, just three berks below us'

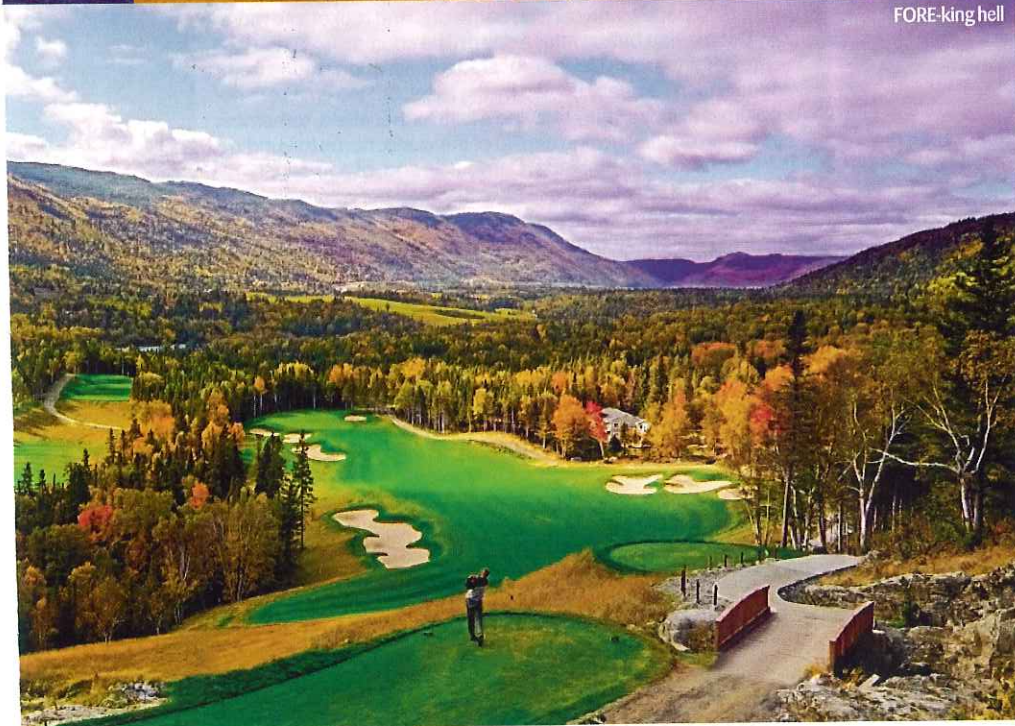


Here's the lounge...



...here's the lounge act

FORE-king hell



panorama to mask faults with the layout. And with the Humber River winding peacefully through the valley of pines and mountains that formerly housed a glacier, Doug could have gone down this route. But moreso than the mountain-shaped bunkers, the all-round excellence of the fairways, the hidden danger of the greens or even the unique experience of being startled by a moose on the tee, the greatest compliment I can give this course is that, if you were to replace the vista with a sink estate in Hackney, it would still remain in my top five. And if you consider that five doesn't include Hoylake or Sawgrass, you'll see just how good it is.

Above the dream-like luxury surrounded by rugged wilderness, beyond the love you'll gain for the golf course and the sheer, naked, nothingness of the night, it is what Humber Valley means to the locals that lifts it above the competition. There is a family attitude at Humber and not just any old family, but one of those families that have huge gatherings six times a year and delight in each other's company. From legendary greenkeeper Mike Rossi to man machine Scott Donald, everyone is on first-name terms, the accent

is on giving you an experience rather than just accepting your cash, and, in short, I want to live there, forever. Other than golf, you can hike to the wondrous Grose Morne Park, spend an evening on the beach with ornery

**Get decked up in full wetsuits and life-jackets and paddle in a pedalo like five-year-olds**

local Ron as he prepares one of his legendary bonfires, or commandeer a variety of vessels to take on the lake. Or you could do what we did, which is get decked up in full wetsuits and life-jackets and paddle around in a pedalo like five-year-olds.

And after that, there was only one thing left to do. To be 'screched' in and made honorary Newfoundlanders. We drank rum, learnt the local dialect and, to fully ingratiate ourselves, kissed a cod on the lips.

Six-and-a-half hours later, stationary on the tarmac at Gatwick, my phone crackled into life. 75 missed calls, 39 voicemails and 110 text messages read the display. "Pass me that felt-tip Crouchy," I said wearily. "I think I need to speak to the fairy." 🗨️

OWEN BLACKHURST

Humber Valley, NL, Canada AOL 1KO  
Details: Par 72, 7199 yards  
Cost: £50

**For information on property or holidays at Humber Valley Resort please call +1 709 686 1232, email [info@humbervalley.com](mailto:info@humbervalley.com) or visit [www.humbervalley.com](http://www.humbervalley.com) – or contact Barwell Leisure: +44 (0) 870 049 3095 or at [www.barwell.co.uk](http://www.barwell.co.uk)**