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A builder who likes plenty of space around his new houses

Ray Stelling is a man who likes a bit of space around him, and that is reflected in the attractive housing estate his firm is building.

It must be one of the least-cramped developments Teesdale has ever known, with a lot more greenery than can be seen around most modern homes.

Ray and his wife Christine are directors of Southfield Builders Ltd, which is putting up the estate at High Etherley, on the other side of the A68 from Toft Hill School.

The 40 houses ready or nearing completion so far have all been sold, with 30 occupied and new owners about to move into the others. More will be completed at a steady rate in the coming months, and in all 120 are planned.

Ray was brought up on a nearby farm owned by his late father, Ernest Stelling, so from an early age he was used to working in the open air with plenty of room around him.

He still lives in the farmhouse there, and he still does a bit of farming, with a pedigree herd of 50 Charolais cattle to keep him busy when he is not dealing with new houses.

His family sold the building land about 16 years ago, but after more than a decade he bought it back to enable the present development to go ahead.

He pointed out that he is building nine houses to the acre, whereas many larger companies aim to put 14 or more to the acre. "There are big gardens and plenty of space everywhere," he said.

"I'm sure that gives a far better quality of life than having everyone jammed close together. Our rooms are larger too than in many other modern houses."

Ray, who was a noted footballer in his younger days, feels he gives better value for money than most of the bigger builders.

Prices have gone up since the first houses were completed, but they still range from under £43,000 for a bungalow to just over £60,000 for a four bedroomed detached house.

"There has been a lot of talk by councillors, and reports in the Mercury, about the need for cheaper homes in which young families can get a start," he stated.

"But I think this is just about as cheap as anyone



Ray Stelling

could get for new houses with top quality fittings, garages, double glazing and room to move around."

He and Christine are opening a sales office this weekend for the next stage of their development, but they haven't yet got round to something they intended at the outset - a showhouse.

"They have all been sold so quickly that we have never had a spare one to use as a showhouse," Christine said.

"But people who come to the sales office will be able to look around the estate and go into houses which are almost ready. Most people who do look round say they are impressed."

Walkabout takes in church sites

The final meeting of Barnard Castle Methodist Guild was a walkabout in various parts of the town to let members learn something of old church sites.

There was a good company, both young and elderly, setting off from Trinity. They noted various spots on the way to the

Hole in the Wall, where John Wesley held services.

Visits were then made to the parish churchyard and Thorngate. In some places old religious buildings could still be seen.

They returned to Trinity for a welcome cup of tea supplied by some ladies of the guild.



Miss Dianne Catherine Mary Barron was married at Barnard Castle Parish Church to Mr Christopher Neil Luscombe.

Dianne is the elder daughter of Mrs Christine Barron of 57 Bartlemere and the late Mr I. Barron. Christopher is the elder son of Mr and Mrs Brian Luscombe of Falmouth.

The service was conducted by the Rev Peter Lind-Jackson, and Mrs Dobinson decorated the church.

Given away by a family friend, Mr Richard Guy, the bride wore a dress of embroidered ivory dupian silk, trimmed with pearls. She had a veil of pure silk edged with pearls. Her bouquet was of peach roses and lilies.

Chief bridesmaid was Joanne Harrison. Others were Janine Barron, the bride's sis-

ter, and Sandra Stevens. They wore dresses of peach moire and carried bouquets of peach roses.

Flower girls were Elaine and Corinne Meyrick, the bride's cousins, who wore dresses of ivory silk with peach sashes.

Best man was Mr John Watson. Groomsmen were Mr Simon Barron and Mr David Luscombe, the couple's brothers. Page boys were David Barron and Adrian Maycock, their nephews.

For travelling to a honeymoon in Singapore and Penang, Dianne wore a purple floral dress with lilac jacket and shoes.

She and Christopher, who are both chemists with Glaxo at Ware, are making their home in Stevenage.

Picture: John Robinson

Best wishes to Southfield Builders

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