

The GOLD standard

They're the North Devon success story which keeps scooping up travel industry awards. Our writer DANIEL JAMES visited Millbrook Cottages to see what is so special about the place

LOVE is in the air. Everywhere I look around. Love is in the air. Every sight and every sound.

I don't know where George Young and Harry Vanda were when they wrote the 1977 disco ballad classic for John Paul Young, but modern day songsmiths can surround themselves with the same romantic notions in a North Devon cottage.

Found in the Saxon village of High Bickington, Rose Cottage will warm the coldest of hearts.

As we walked from the car to the beautiful thatched property on arrival, a couple of elderly ladies stopped to say hello. They asked if we were staying in the cottage, told us how lovely it was and wished us a good time. A welcome start.

We opened the door to the smell of a freshly baked loaf in the bread maker, a pot of butter and some local jam - and couldn't help but feel like we'd stumbled into "the good old

days" or an early scene from *The Railway Children*.

It's an 18th Century cottage with 21st Century luxuries and forms part of the wider Millbrook Cottages portfolio.

As we hastily explored, music was playing throughout every room thanks to a fancy Sonos streaming system - and some rock classics had been chosen, just to my liking. I have to admit wondering if they'd perhaps cyber-stalked my musical likes, given how accurate the playlist was.

But apparently not - it was just one of the many things that owners Kate and Bob Boothby managed to get spot-on throughout our stay.

In the kitchen was a huge section of Clipper teas, fancy Nescafé Krups coffee maker, Love Hearts in heart-shaped dishes and flowers, while a cake on the dining table was iced with a "Welcome to Rose Cottage" greeting. Brownie points galore.

A selection of wines, spirits and



The Millbrook Estate

champagne awaited the fall of night on a beautiful honesty bar.

Romance and technology don't often blend together perfectly, but there's plenty of it in Rose Cottage, without ever defining it because it's discrete.

Head up the stairs and there's a rope bannister to guide you. At the top you'll be greeted by a massive (6 foot) bathtub for two and the word Love picked out above it.

The bedroom has one of the biggest beds I've ever slept in, and an intimate, retro vibe with warm hues of cream, brown and purple. Vera Wang and Calvin Klein smellies sit on the dressing table to help put the scent of love in the air.

We spent our wintry weekend relaxing in front of the log burner,



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Weirmarsh Farm

IF you can tear yourself away from Rose Cottage, Bob and Kate highly recommend visiting Weirmarsh Farm Restaurant for dinner.

As close as I've ever come to eating in someone else's dining room, it felt more like visiting friends than dining out. Relaxing for drinks in the lounge before the meal with rain lashing down outside, it was a very warm welcome as we reclined by the log burner.

A huge bowl of tomato and basil soup kicked off the five-course meal, with tender and tangy sweet chilli chicken wings following it up.

A zingy lemon sorbet cleansed the palette before an epic main course of huge slices of turkey served with all the trimmings.

We finished up with a beautifully creamy pannacotta and fresh berries before reclining in the lounge to chat to Peter, our host, who added a perfectly personal touch to a delightful dinner.

weirmarshfarmrestaurant.co.uk

Winners all the way

Millbrook Cottages took gold for their luxurious self-catering accommodation at the prestigious South West Tourism Awards. The awards formed the regional heat of the national VisitEngland awards, to which Millbrook Cottages will now progress.

sipping champagne while either listening to soothing songs or watching eye-popping movies.

Marshmallows are provided by the fireside too, so of course we couldn't resist roasting some and making messy fools of ourselves.

While we dined out on our first night at Weirmarsh (see separate panel), the warmth of Rose Cottage meant we abandoned any notion of leaving the house on the second day - so knocked up a home-cooked meal and ate by candlelight at the dining table. We're glad we did. It meant no worries about enjoying a drink before driving back, and that bit of extra bubbly lead to us heading outside at gone 9pm to enjoy the hot tub.

Just when you thought an intimate 18th-Century cottage couldn't have

any more to offer, we found ourselves in a totally-private garden area in our swimwear, enjoying the massaging jets and atmospheric lights while emptying the last of the champers.

'Just when you thought an intimate 18th-Century cottage couldn't have any more to offer, we found ourselves in a totally private garden area, enjoying massaging jets, atmospheric lights and the last of the champers'

The air was crisp, but we couldn't have been more content in the warm water.

And there's plenty more to Rose Cottage we don't have space to go into - there's a second bedroom downstairs and a welcoming pub just a ten-yard stagger away.

Rose Cottage really is a place where

you leave your troubles at the front door.

It's "boutique chic" where romance seeps from every corner and every little touch felt like it was a classy and

deliberate thought to make your stay better.

I know it's not just me that thinks this either - as the multitude of awards rolling the way of Millbrook Cottages confirms. ■

For further details visit rosecottagedevon.co.uk or MillbrookCottages.co.uk or telephone 01769 629069