

Clare Revels in the gift of time

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Now I could do with a personal assistant someone at my beck and call to do whatever I'm too busy to do, starting with Christmas.

I know just the woman to do it. But like I told her: "I can't afford you, Not at £25 an hour." But there are plenty who can.

What luxury to be hassle-free, have someone else to do the running, come home to the Christmas tree up, decorations done, garlands adorning doors, logs in, candles flickering and fairy lights festooned.

If only. I'm too busy to live and don't know when we'll get the tree, never get it up. And what a carry on that is. It's always too tall, needs lopping, falls over, the lights never work and new ones have to be bought.

Now if I had Clare Rutherford, I'd be stress free. In fact, I wouldn't mind her job.

She's got a cracking number,, and is snowed under at the minute helping the well-heeled with their Christmas shopping and decorating their homes.

Clare, 33, is so busy getting people and places in festive order, that she doesn't know either when shell get her own tree up in her three bed semi.

Country houses and palatial homes at Darras Hall are definitely up Clare's street at this time of year.

"The last one I decorated the other day, including my fee, was £1,600. It was beautiful, with hand-made garlands, jewelled wreaths..."

Wow. I wish I had that kind of money to spend.
Who does?

Clare explains: "People with disposable income-solicitors, dentists, business people, People are spending a lot of money decorating their homes. They want

them to be really ornate not just bits of tinsel. They are customising their homes now, and they just don't want to do it themselves. They haven't got the time."

And that's where Clare comes into her own. A former long haul air hostess, she had the bright idea of setting herself up in business exactly one year ago as the North East's only concierge service, Regalo.

She's never looked back and has regular clients on Wearside and throughout the region.

Caught in the Christmas rush, her business is booming, with folks forking out anything from £500 to £2,000, including Clare's fee to have their homes made beautiful.

"I just love my job. I get the work done efficiently; otherwise they will never come back. The other day my fee was £250 for one-and a half days work, but there were three of us."

That's pretty reasonable I reckon. Clare knows it is and tells me if she's booked for five hours at someone's house there's a 10 percent reduction. She admits: "The bit I don't like is asking for my money, and this service is so much dearer in Leeds and London."

It's certainly catching on here and for a tenner and hour she'll book tickets for the latest shows, meals out, organise special occasions, parties and book your holiday. It's all part of her concierge service.

The word concierge comes from the French, *comte des clerges* - the "keeper of the candles" - a throwback to when servants attended of the whims of visiting noblemen at medieval castles.

"I am sure concierge is now a new word in the Geordie Vocabulary." says Clare, who adds, "more and more people are latching on to the fact that the gift of time is very valuable - even though I do feel a bit like Santa Claus at the moment".

And as she swung into action to dress a towering tree outside yet another country home, Clare was counting her blessings that her strapping, 6ft 3in fireman husband, Iain was on the right shift to help her get the lights up.

For more details log on to www.regalo-cs.com.