

# **Editorial examples**

**Alexander Wright**



# Blooming Bembridge

When Jenna Long decided to transform part of her family's land in Bembridge into a flower farm last year, it began as a simple idea — after all, who doesn't love flowers? What followed has been a year of growth in every sense. From mastering the art of handling rotavators, ploughs, irrigation and cultivation, (and tackling far more weeding than anticipated) to building a loyal customer base, Bembridge Flower Farm has flourished into a vibrant local enterprise.

The farm is now home to sweeping rows of seasonal tulips, ranunculus, sunflowers, dahlias, cosmos, snapdragons and peonies. Free from pesticides and the considerable carbon footprint of imported blooms, Jenna's flowers offer a fresh, sustainable alternative to supermarket bouquets and are noticeably superior to mass produced worldwide imports which make up around 95% of the UK's flower industry.

The freshly picked flowers last longer, have rich, deep and vibrant colour tones and have high floral scents. The flowers

have been curated and selected so they are vibrant and 'best in class'. Demand has been strong: Saturday deliveries to Sage Coffee House in St Helens frequently sell out quickly.

The business has expanded beyond bouquets. With a professional website, regular flower subscriptions bringing seasonal colour into homes and offices, and a growing calendar of events hosted on-site, Bembridge Flower Farm has become part of the community fabric.

Looking ahead, Jenna plans to supply more local retailers, provide flowers for weddings and special occasions, and grow the popular pick-your-own and Flower Farm Picnic experiences. What started as a bright idea has taken root — and Bembridge is blooming because of it.

[bembridgeflowerfarm.co.uk](http://bembridgeflowerfarm.co.uk)





Your garden designed, sourced, built and planted by Ventnor Botanic Garden



## Ventnor Botanic magic

Ventnor Botanic 'Garden Creations' offer a bespoke commercial garden design and realisation service for clients who want something a bit special. Their in-house expertise, unrivalled plant knowledge and experienced team, led by Curator Chris Kidd, is invaluable.

"Botanic Gardens are becoming increasingly relevant in the face of the climate emergency. So how we garden, how we practice plant conservation, and how we operate are becoming as important as the plants themselves."

VBGC offers imaginative schemes for new gardens, makeovers, transformations

and consultancy to anyone - from private homes to hotels and offices, whether on the Island or further afield. Chris is passionate about plants and gardens, landing his dream job as head gardener at Ventnor 25 years ago. Additional services include legacy arboretums, afforestation and estate master planning

And if you just want some inspiration, you can spend an afternoon wandering around Ventnor Botanic Garden and have a bite to eat in the cafe!

[www.botanic.co.uk/about/gardencreations](http://www.botanic.co.uk/about/gardencreations)

VBG Creations offers a bespoke, garden design and creation service for gardens that need to be special.

Clients range from private clients to hotels and business, Isle of Wight and nationwide.

New gardens and landscapes, makeovers, transformations and consultancy.

Unrivalled plant knowledge and experience



Before



After



# Nature-friendly Nunwell

The Oglander family have owned land at Nunwell forever - almost a thousand acres for a thousand years. Until recently, it was let to tenant farmers but in 2022, a deal with The Wildlife Trust's Nutrient Reduction Programme changed all that for a third of the land. This rewilding has also freed up farmyards on the estate, with barns and sheds waiting for a new purpose in life. 'Purpose' being something that the current band of new tenants all have in common.

Hollie Fallick and Francesca Cooper were introduced to Robert Oglander via a connection with BCM Wilson Hill; they are passionate about the animals they rear on part of the land which is a great fit with the high level land stewardship scheme and wood pasture restoration. Interestingly, they once tried vegan and vegetarian lifestyles in an effort to support animal welfare, but this diet had a poor effect on their health, so they researched ethical meat production. Now their mission is to show that the land can work for nature while also producing nutrient dense food and they have just spent their 4th winter at Nunwell with the associated highs and lows, avidly watched by their 5,000 Instagram followers. Nunwell Farm meat is delivered all over the Island and is also sold at The Nunwell Farm Kitchen, the brand new on-site farm shop.

Landowner Rob is a full time BA pilot with a deep love of South Africa. It seemed obvious to him that they should use one of the barns to host a big summer BBQ to celebrate the farm's produce so he teamed up with chef Alex Kimber from The Heron restaurant. Together they created Braai, an Afrikaans word pronounced 'bry' (rhyming with 'try'), which is so much more than just cooking food over flames - it's all about the atmosphere, the taste, the experience, and the people that you share it with. They were serving 1000 people on some weekends last summer in a spruced up but rustic Dutch barn with a view over the land. This was the perfect vehicle to involve

the other farm tenants, Wight Whisky and Wight Knuckle Brewery, who each rent converted buildings onsite for their production operations.

Lucy Gregg, a former marketer turned entrepreneur, set up Wight Whisky with her husband in 2023. They only use barley farmed on the Island working hand in hand with Isle of Wight Grain, a non-profit organisation that supports and represents the local barley farmers. The whisky mash is brewed and then fermented for over 7 days before the distilling process begins at New Farm. Once the whisky has matured they use water from Knighton springs, supplied by Wight Crystal, during the blending and bottling process. It's a real Island affair and is the first whisky brand from the Isle of Wight and Hampshire. They sell a lot of whisky at the Braai events and Alex Kimber makes some wonderful whisky based desserts too.

Their neighbour is the Wight Knuckle Brewery, founded in 2021 by brothers Ed and Fergus Bristow. This Island micro brewery started life in Bembridge behind The Pilot Boat Inn, their father George's pub, which was their Tap Room until its sale last year. They are proud that all of their natural beers are unfiltered, unpasteurised and 100% vegan. The leftover grains from the initial mashing stage of brewing are fed to the pigs on the farm as they are rich in nutrients and fibre which is clever as it reduces waste, helping the overall sustainability efforts. They now run tours and events at their Nunwell base where you can sample award winning Pale Ale - voted the best beer in the South East of England by SIBA in 2023, and their crisp lager. Rob Oglander is such a fan he's now the majority shareholder!

The newest tenant to join the fold is Alex Kent's Isle of Wight Mushrooms, who are the original UK cultivator and producer of medicinal mushroom tinctures (daily supplements taken for

health and wellbeing). Their Grow Kits are a fun and easy way to get your own fresh crop of delicious oyster mushrooms and are educational for both children and adults. Watch out for mushroom magic on the Braai menu too.

This family of businesses not only get along with each other, they are thriving as a collective. The Heron has a brand new industrial kitchen to prepare food for the Braai events as well as making ready meals which are sold in the shop. The Nunwell Farm Kitchen is open from 10-2pm Tuesday-Saturday where you can buy farm meat, eggs and honey alongside a curated selection of local produce including, of course, Wight Whisky, Wight Knuckle Brewery beer, Isle of Wight Cheese Co cheeses, Briddlesford Dairy, Grazed Knee Cider, Pipers Farm chicken and Little Span Farm lamb plus an array

of local vegetables - and soon, Nunwell mushrooms! They also have olive oil and a selection of wines from the Babylonstoren Estate from Rob's beloved South Africa.

The BCM Wilson Hill Planning & Development team is currently working with Rob on some exciting new ideas. No doubt the tenants will be involved in these ventures.

[braai-iow.co.uk](http://braai-iow.co.uk)  
[nunwellfarmkitchen.co.uk](http://nunwellfarmkitchen.co.uk)  
[wightwhisky.com](http://wightwhisky.com)  
[wightknucklebrewery.com](http://wightknucklebrewery.com)  
[iwmushrooms.co.uk](http://iwmushrooms.co.uk)

What 3 words location:  
 captive.truffles.draining





# Growing the Future of Hemp

Nick Joyce first discovered the potential of industrial hemp in his mid-twenties, much to the amusement of his peers. He was intrigued by the plant's versatility and sustainability and began growing the plant on the Island to explore its applications. This led to the creation of GRWN, a collaborative group of specialist companies, based in Cowes. Operating across every level of the sector Nick has an ambitious vision: to create a fully vertically integrated hemp business, from field to finished product.

GRWN farms over 500 acres of Home Office approved hemp across the UK. Hemp is a brilliant crop; highly sustainable, fast-growing (approx. 4 months) requiring little water, no pesticides, and acts as a carbon sink. It enhances soil health through deep roots, prevents erosion, and provides a versatile, eco-friendly raw material for textiles, construction, and biofuel as well as being a great rotational crop.

Among GRWN's most promising innovations is GRWNwarm - hemp-based building insulation. Designed for modern construction, it offers excellent thermal performance in both winter and summer, natural resistance to mould, strong soundproofing qualities and enhanced fire protection. Free from pollutants and exceptionally durable, it also locks away carbon long term and can be reprocessed at the end of its life, making it a truly circular material. You can order GRWNwarm insulation from B&Q, Jewson and Travis Perkins as well as other outlets.



GRWN has also launched GRWNhome, an eco-housing concept created in collaboration with Sydenhams Timber Engineering. Designed to deliver sustainable living without compromising comfort, it is fully circular in its production and lifecycle.

The timing is no coincidence. Demand for sustainable housing is rising sharply, with growing environmental awareness and a clear appetite for healthier, more energy-efficient homes. Interest in net-zero living has surged in recent years as homeowners increasingly recognise both the environmental impact and long-term cost savings of homes that generate as much energy as they consume.

With innovation rooted in nature and a clear vision for the future, GRWN Group is helping to redefine how we build — and how we live. The construction industry needs to cut carbon emissions and improve energy performance making the demand for smarter, greener building solutions urgent. GRWN Group alongside Sydenhams Timber Engineering, has been selected to help deliver low-carbon homes at Nansledan, a flagship sustainable development by the Duchy of Cornwall. Blending natural materials with forward-thinking design, GRWNhome represents a major step toward scalable, sustainable housing — proving that high performance and environmental responsibility can go hand in hand.

[grwngroup.com](http://grwngroup.com)

# Home Office Goals

*Ben & Holly Cooke are the husband and wife team of The Little Gloster, voted Best Local Restaurant in the United Kingdom 2020 by the Good Food Guide.*



During the first Covid lockdown Ben and Holly decided to change direction and closed the doors of their Gurnard restaurant and rooms to embark on a new adventure. They have since created a unique wooden cabin, hidden at the bottom of their garden near Cowes on the Isle of Wight, with beautiful countryside views.

Designed and built by themselves, The Lille Cabin is both office and creative space, kitted out with a bespoke high-spec kitchen, where they can share their passion for cookery as well as consulting work. Lille translates to Little in Danish and is inspired by their Danish & English roots as well as Ben's wonderful 'Mormor' Lillian.

The gorgeous multi-use space is also a food studio - somewhere to transform wonderful produce into delicious recipes, develop products and professionally photograph or film

content for themselves and external brands. They are also the curators of the Feast Collective at Camp Bestival, and have taken on the regular training of Superyacht interior students at the UK Sailing Academy (UKSA).

Hopefully this venture will inspire you to build something creative at the bottom of your garden but, of course, if you have big plans BCM are on hand to advise on planning and design issues!

You can keep an eye on what Ben and Holly are up to on Instagram [@thelittlegloster](https://www.instagram.com/thelittlegloster)

# Coates and Seely

*In 2008 two old friends, Nicholas Coates and Christian Seely, embarked on a quest to make a sparkling wine to rival the best in the world.*



**T**hey were drawn to the ancient downlands of Hampshire where the chalk soils and south-facing slopes presented the perfect terroir.

A mile to the south of the Hampshire vineyards, the clear chalk stream of the River Test flows along the valley floor, passing through the historic paper-making villages of Overton and Whitchurch. Three miles to the North lies the high chalk ridge of Watership Down, one of the highest points in Hampshire, that iron-age man first used as a vantage point.

They planted vines and began their craft to make their sparkling wines

which are now listed in royal palaces, Michelin-starred restaurants and iconic houses around the world. Gold Medals and Trophies have been achieved in leading national and international wine competitions.

In 2019 their 2009 Blanc de Blancs 'La Perfide' won the International IWSC Trophy for Best Bottle Fermented Sparkling Wine and they are still the only English wine to be listed at the George V hotel in Paris.

They restrict productive capacity and focus on quality using traditional wine-making craftsmanship with the latest technology such as the only concrete

fermentation eggs in England.

They also employ the skills of French craftsmen who make wines of distinction, that are properly and fully aged, both on lees and on cork, using rigorous fruit selection.

Their non-vintage wines make extensive use of reserve wines from previous years and are lees-aged for between 24 and 36 months. This gives them depth and complexity.

The vintage wines – 'La Perfide' – are made from grapes from a single year and are lees-aged for a minimum of 4-5 years, with further bottle-ageing,



on cork, post-disgorgement. Vintages are only made in years when the fruits are exceptional, and for this reason they have only made vintage wines in 6 of their 13 harvests to date.

[www.coatesandseely.com](http://www.coatesandseely.com)  
[instagram.com/coatesandseely](https://www.instagram.com/coatesandseely)

*Photos: contributed*





# Right Plant, Right Place

FEATHERSTONE'S ENGLISH FLOWER CO.

*BCM are fortunate to manage the beautiful Nine Mile Water Farm near Stockbridge in Hampshire.*

A stunning fifteenth century barn on one of the farmsteads captured our imagination when first shown the Estate and we made it our mission to find a suitable use for the building.

Given the Grade I listing and agricultural use of the barn, some alternative thinking was required. When Jess Roberts and Katie Stone got in touch, looking for premises to start their own sustainable flower farm, it was a perfect match. The Tithe Barn and part of an arable field at Berry Court Farm have been transformed into a thriving flower farm with 3 acres of bulbs, annuals, perennials and shrubs laid out in nearly 3.5km of flower beds.

The 15th Century Barn is a beautiful example of a tithe barn with flint walls and incredible high ceilings and tiles that local historians say were ordered in 1460. Using the building for a flower farm has allowed a previously underutilised building to be brought to life as part of a farming enterprise, albeit a slightly different kind of agriculture from the traditional storing of rents and tithes - one tenth of the farms produce was required

to be given to the local church - the original purpose of the barn.

Using the 28-day planning rule, Jess and Katie run workshops, a Christmas Market and the Featherstone's Flower Club, allowing the public access to the stunning location and to benefit from their incredible knowledge of sustainable growing techniques and floriculture.

Featherstone's English Flower Co. have recently celebrated their one-year anniversary at Berry Court Farm and go from strength to strength. Using their combined expertise, farmer Jess, and florist Katie, supply a range of local hotels, businesses and private clients with stunning floral displays used for many purposes including weddings across Hampshire and beyond. They pride themselves in using natural, compostable or reusable floristry techniques to create imaginative and beautiful arrangements.

For more information on Featherstone's English Flower Co., or to sign up for one of their events please visit - [www.featherstoneflowers.co.uk](http://www.featherstoneflowers.co.uk).





# More nature — less food?

## THE JOURNEY TO '30 BY 30'

The iconic turtle dove has all but disappeared from the British countryside. This bell weather species was once widespread; its decline is a clear indicator of the rapid depletion of wildlife across the nation that has accelerated as post-WW2 agricultural efficiency and other environmental pressures have come to bear. But the tide is turning.

Fuelled by the drive to net-zero carbon and pressure from strong environmental lobbies the government has put in place a bold framework to halt this decline and restore nature. Through the Environment Act 2021 the government has, to quote '... committed to protect 30 percent of our land and sea by 2030 ('30 by 30'), and to reach net zero emissions by 2050. Nature will play a crucial role in delivering our climate targets, particularly as a carbon sink, and in improving our climate resilience'

What does this mean for farming, food and the countryside?

We grow a plentiful amount of food in the UK but not enough to feed ourselves – we import 46% of what we eat. Some advocate more imports – perhaps cheaper food – while others, the National Farmers Union amongst them, predict a terminal decline in our farming industry if the balance is tipped further.

The front-line between nature and farming is a blurred one. In the extreme is the (often misused) phrase of 'rewilding' which is deemed to be a wholesale abandonment of farmed land to

nature. In some cases it is. At the other end of the spectrum is the quiet revolution that is regenerative agriculture – a 'soil first', nature friendly way of farming using less artificial inputs and aiming for longer term sustainability. The results are encouraging with reasonable farm outputs and clear indicators of natural recovery, but it's a new skill for farmers and the conventional 'high input' agri-chemical lobby is deeply embedded within the industry.

One thing is for sure – if we want nature to return we must all pay for it; it's an expensive business. The government's flag-ship 'ELMS' initiative which looks to inject around £2 billion into nature enhancing land management across farms. These schemes are clunky and take up is slow – commentators from all sides of the debate recognise that it won't be enough. Can private enterprise help – the answer is yes. A whole new business world is opening up as private funds engage with farmers to sequester carbon, improve nature outputs and protect natural resources. The ever stronger impact of 'corporate social responsibility' is driving new funding into the countryside where business is buying a slice of nature recovery.

This change is a once in a century change in British farming and the countryside but the trade between food production and space for nature is still raging. The Knepp Estate gave over its 3500 acres of dairy and arable land to nature and the turtle doves returned - from 3 to 20 since 1999. A great experiment which we are all watching closely.

# Exton Park Vineyard



One of the perks of working in rural consultancy lies in the relationships that are formed. Some bonds are immediate, others take a little longer. Then, there are those that deepen and broaden with the passing decades, until they move well beyond the boundaries of client and consultant. Back in the early 1990s, a young and spritely Andrew Bays, managing partner at BCM Wilson Hill, began working for the already legendary Malcolm Isaac MBE, former client of Robin Lalonde and founder of Vitacress and visionary in the rapidly growing world of baby leaf salad. Fittingly back then, Malcolm's client reference at a fresh-faced BCM was 0001, and over the ensuing three and a half decades the pair forged a wonderful working relationship, with Andrew eventually being allowed to address him as Malcolm after just three years!

When Vitacress was sold in 2008, Malcolm turned his attentions to Exton Park, where the first vines had been planted five years earlier. Key grapes such as Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Pinot Meunier took centre stage. Under the attentive eye of Vineyard Director, Fred Langdale, the plot, situated some sixty metres above sea level, grew to sixty acres. In 2011, a winery was designed and built under the careful guidance of Head Winemaker, Corinne Seely.

In 2015 Exton Park's first bottle of wine was produced. Since that first bottle, the vineyard has gone on to firmly establish itself, due in equal measure to the quality of its wine and its commitment to the terroir. Nestled in the stunning South Down's National Park, the chalky soil that nourishes its vines in our cooler climate creates a unique identity for the wines. The concentration of fruit allows a freshness and acidity to the taste that so many enjoy.

What also sets Exton Park apart from other vineyards is its single vineyard approach. Everything takes place at the vineyard. All the grapes come from the sixty beautiful acres of prime Hampshire countryside. Lovingly hand-picked, they

are then pressed on site at the Exton winery just a few yards up the slopes from vines. There, they are blended and aged. From first bud to final drop tasted, everything is done within the boundaries of the vineyard. You are truly tasting a product of the region.

When you visit the stunning vineyard site, you are struck not only by the beauty of the setting and its buildings, but also by the huge amounts of biodiversity that surrounds them. Here they take seriously their relationship with their countryside, choosing a natural approach to managing pests and nourishing the vines. Grasses, wildflowers and cover crops play home to a myriad of birdlife, insects and bees. A strong investment into solar power has also helped to lower their carbon footprint significantly.

What is more, Exton Park only grow grapes and make wines for Exton Park. This fierce independence allows the team a freedom to experiment and gives a purity to their wines not always found elsewhere. In effect, they are able to take English sparkling wine beyond the boundaries of the Méthode Champenoise on which their foundations are based.

Such experimentation includes their 60 Above & 60 Below 2014 vintage, ready for drinking this year. Here, you can taste a bottle of the Blancs de Noirs 2014 vintage, aged at 60 metres above sea level. To partner it, there is a second bottle from the same parcel which has been aged off the Brittany coast, some 60 metres below sea level. You can pre-order these now and we look forward to the results with mouth-watering anticipation as they will be released in October 2025.

Sadly, the great man himself passed away in 2024. However, the bonds between his estate and BCM Wilson Hill, and our friendship with Exton Park, remain as strong as ever. And whilst Malcolm may no longer be with us, his legacy truly lives on in his wines.



# Barnsgrove - a 'hidden gem'

Sitting in Palmers Bar at Barnsgrove, River Test gin and tonics in hand, fifth generation farmer James Butler and his wife Jo look out over their arable farm on the Hampshire Downs, happy that their vision for this modern-day country club has finally become a reality. They opened the doors in September 2024, having regenerated the old dairy buildings into a members' clubhouse, centring on social, wellbeing and work. Located near the village of Greyswell in an unspoiled countryside setting, yet close to the M3 and Basingstoke, Barnsgrove bridges the metropolitan / rural gap seamlessly.

When Brexit threatened EU subsidies, Frank Butler Farms had to re-evaluate their position and build alternative income streams. They left the dairy industry in 2008 and had a 30,000 square foot derelict building with huge potential. Jo and James wanted to deliver an offering that would benefit the community

and create employment. The result, Barnsgrove, is an inclusive modern-day country club, with archways, curves, subtle natural colours and materials.

The huge spaces feel intimate and calm, with a Moroccan vibe flowing throughout. The main clubhouse includes Palmers Bar and Orchards Café, which offer a diverse selection of healthy, seasonal food, all cooked fresh in-house each day, led by Chef Consultant, Rosie Smith. From a nourishing breakfast of homemade stem ginger and orange granola with Greek yogurt and plum compote, to a midday refuel of harissa glazed chicken with salsa verde; members can enjoy an ever-evolving menu. From Thursday to Saturday evenings, the clubhouse has a diverse and imaginative programme of events and food experiences designed to bring the Barnsgrove community together. There are resident desks and office spaces that have

been thoughtfully designed, incorporating underfloor heating, air conditioning and shared amenities including a kitchenette, print zone and private zoom booths. Premium features such as secure key fob access, acoustic interiors, high speed WiFi, and post handling services ensure a comfortable serviced office offering. The sublime meeting rooms are equipped with the latest audiovisual facilities, with catering from the Barnsgrove kitchens.

The fitness team at Barnsgrove run a full wellness programme of 19 classes, all included in the membership. There is a fully equipped gym and range of therapists working throughout the week as well as Palace Padel courts. Monthly clubhouse membership starts from £250 for an adult, £150 for a partner and £100 for under 25s, with weekend membership from £100. Resident office desks are from £350 per month with

private offices from £1,800 (all subject to VAT). You can arrange a tour or book a clubhouse experience day.

BCM Wilson Hill have been an integral part of all that Frank Butler Farms have undertaken across their farming enterprise. Founding Partner, Henry McCowen has been a constant support and advisor and has enabled the farm to pivot and grow throughout the time that James and Jo have been at the helm as the custodians of the company, nurturing it for the generations that follow.

barnsgrove.com  
membership@barnsgrove.com



"The whole experience was flawless - I truly didn't want to leave. It's a hidden gem"  
Richard DS, December 2024



# Robin Hill 2.0



The Isle of Wight's famous Robin Hill Adventure Park was bought in August 2024 by local businessmen and close friends, Lee Priddle and John Smith. With a family background in farming and a number of Island businesses between them, the 88 acre park is an all-consuming new challenge. They are committed to preserving Robin Hill's legacy and determined to keep it a favourite destination for future generations by safeguarding the park's natural beauty while enhancing its attractions, creating an immersive experience for visitors.

The team have so far installed 16 brand-new attractions including real mini diggers, an electric boat safari, an 18-hole

crazy golf course and an indoor ice rink with more to come in due course. Additionally, they are unveiling a separate ticketed area, the 'Adrenaline Zone'. Suitable for all ages it will offer exhilarating, high-energy activities. The food offering has been carefully considered and Jaspers coffee has been chosen for the café while Alex Kimber is opening a Heron Smoke House 'restaurant with a view' on site.

The Isle Film Company has been following the team's progress getting the park ready to open by filming a six-part documentary which started in February and will conclude with Robin Hill welcoming visitors through its doors on 4<sup>th</sup> April

2025. The series will be broadcast on television later this year.

The new owners are also keen to support the local community by partnering with a number of Island charities and hosting various fundraising events at the park throughout the year. Additionally, they are establishing the Robin Hill Fund through Wight AID to assist some of the families who are much in need of help on the Isle of Wight.

Other plans include funding and installing a Changing Places facility, designed to accommodate individuals who cannot

use standard facilities independently. This essential addition will provide ample space and specialised equipment, ensuring accessibility for everyone, not just park visitors.

Robin Hill opens on Friday, 4th April 2025. Tickets can be purchased in advance online or at the gates. It's a dog friendly site so, if you buy a pass, you can come and walk your hound as often as you like!

[robin-hill.com](http://robin-hill.com)



## CONTEMPORARY ART



**Joanne Hummel-Newell combines collage, painting and installation.**

Hailed as 'The next generation to turn its back on Emin and Hirst's conceptual artworks' by the Observer, she has exhibited widely, including the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition, and has a growing international collector base.

Jo works from her home studio near Seaview. "I walk most days along the coastline near my studio and document the changing horizon. I'm interested in how natural environments affect the psychology of human beings and the rituals we invent in order to interact with the natural world".

Her current work is informed by the natural world as well as tidal, gravitational, seasonal and chronological forces. "Colours are taken from the local landscape, with its pastel buildings, boating paraphernalia and bleached signage." Jo sells limited edition prints and originals from her website and welcomes studio visits by appointment.

[www.joannehummelnewell.com](http://www.joannehummelnewell.com)





OPPOSITE: Private dining room in full renovated glory. THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: North House hotel front; sitting on the new terrace; the new pool area; a room mid-renovation; new terrace on the site of the Rawlings pool

Cowes has been the global centre of yachting since August 1826 when George IV started what is now "Cowes Week". Over the years numerous yacht clubs, pubs and restaurants have served all tastes and budgets but to stay somewhere special, assuming you don't own a luxury yacht, required a half hour taxi ride to either Yarmouth, Ventnor or Seaview.

That is not to say that Cowes lacks hotels; one of the most famous was Rawlings on Sun Hill which, at £40 a-night, once hosted Princes William and Harry when they attended Peter Phillips' stag do in 2008. Rumour has it that the boiler broke and they had no hot water but that didn't dampen their spirits. Just like the 1970's decor, it was all part of the charm.

Fast-forward to May 2015 when local entrepreneurs Lewis Green and Luke Staples spotted an opportunity when Rawlings was put up for sale. They had already established their unique style and flair for hospitality with the popular Coast Bar and Kitchen on the site of another Cowes institution, The Alamo. Coast made it onto The Times '25 best places to have Sunday brunch in the UK' list.

They bought Rawlings without seeking external shareholders and set about giving Cowes its first cosmopolitan hotel. According to Lewis, they wanted to create a "new mould of hotel". He learned the ropes working on superyachts where attention to detail and seamless service is on another level while Luke, his chef partner, gained his stripes working for a Midland catering company and later helping them to roll-out new venues in and around London.

Most of the building contractors were local, tested on the pair's previous projects in Cowes. They knew exactly what they wanted so, instead of employing an architect, they asked Graham at CAD Delta to translate their ideas into architectural plans. They managed the entire project themselves and used Darren Phillips for heating and plumbing, Barry

"They bought Rawlings without seeking external shareholders and set about giving Cowes its first cosmopolitan hotel."





# GLASS



**Isle of Wight Studio Glass was asked to make the trophies for the Osborne Horse Trials.**

Founded in 1973 by celebrated glass designer Michael Harris, the studio has become one of the island's best visitor attractions. It is now run by Michael's son Timothy Harris, recognised internationally as a leading designer and maker of studio glass. Timothy's studio pieces are found in the private collections, galleries and museums around the world. In 2012 Timothy was commissioned by the people of the Isle of Wight to make a glass bowl to be presented to HM The Queen during Her Majesty's Diamond Jubilee visit, and which eventually became part of the Royal Collection. A replica of this splendid bowl, inspired by the sea and coastlines of the Isle of Wight, is on display in the Studio Shop at Arreton. The studio is open seven days per week and a visit provides an opportunity to watch a master craftsman and his team at work. There is also a large collection of Timothy's work for sale in the studio shop.

[www.isleofwightstudioglass.co.uk](http://www.isleofwightstudioglass.co.uk)



# INVESTING RIGHT

## on the Isle of Wight

We asked Suzanne Priddle, **Blue Chip Holidays'** local manager, for some advice as the Isle of Wight is one of their most popular destinations; a holiday-let hotspot.

If you are considering investing in a holiday-let on the Island, consider what's important to your potential guests; choosing the right area is a key factor. As well as location, a holiday home's features can make all the difference to occupancy

levels. Blue Chip find that top performing holiday homes include sea views, enclosed gardens, parking, internet access, luxury furnishings, dog-friendly and hot tubs! Coastal areas are popular with buyers and renters but the beauty of the Isle of Wight is that every region has its own character and flavour.

### THE NORTH

The famous sailing regatta, Cowes Week, usually takes place during the first week of August. This week alone can generate a significant rental premium as many sailors require accommodation for crew and guests. It is not the only event as Cowes is busy from Easter to September. The high-speed Red Jet ferry links Cowes with Southampton and neighbouring East Cowes is home to the Red Funnel Car ferry. The town centre is packed with pubs, restaurants and independent boutique shops and is a good central base for visitors to explore the Island.

To the west of Cowes is the Newtown River, a vast National Trust nature reserve of mud flats and birds. This beautiful area

is close to both Cowes and Yarmouth and home to a stunning Blue Chip managed property, **Shalfleet Manor** (see photos).

### SANDOWN & SHANKLIN

Located in the south east of the Island, these towns are busy as they are near popular tourist attractions, including Dinosaur Isle and the Isle of Wight Zoo – there are also some stunning sandy beaches popular with younger visitors. This is the perfect destination for families, so investing in a holiday property here will generate steady income from the 'bucket-and-spade brigade'. It is still possible to find some good value property for sale.

### SOUTH & WEST WIGHT

Visitors looking for a quieter more relaxed time away often choose Ventnor on the south coast for its artistic vibe or Yarmouth/Freshwater/Totland out in the naturally beautiful west. Ventnor and Yarmouth have a certain unique charm which appeals to a more discerning visitor. The south is far away from the hustle and bustle of the

ferry ports and the west is an area of outstanding natural beauty popular with cyclists and adventure seekers (paragliding, surfing and shooting). Investing in a one or two-bedroom cottage here would make a lucrative holiday let, attracting couples and small adult groups. Ventnor is considered an up-and-coming area and likely to be more affordably priced, giving a higher return on your investment compared to Yarmouth which is an established prime area.

### EAST WIGHT

Bembridge and Seaview are located on a beautiful stretch of coastline with views of the English Channel. Both villages have fantastic sandy beaches and are popular for sailing holidays. Each has an established yacht club and regular set of loyal visitors with property prices significantly higher than the nearby ferry port of Ryde. There are some of the Island's best hotels and restaurants in the area although Seaview can be rather quiet out of season. **Tel 0333 305 9801**  
[bluechipholidays.co.uk](http://bluechipholidays.co.uk)  
[bluechipowners.co.uk](http://bluechipowners.co.uk)



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