

ISLE OF WIGHT

MY NEIGHBOURHOOD

TOY MAKER MANDA MCGRORY SHOWS US HER FAVOURITE PLACES ON THE ISLAND SHE HAS COME TO CALL HOME

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Enjoying the sun and
spray at Freshwater Bay.
Opposite: Manda built
the studio herself,
where she now stitches
her woodland creatures





"I THOUGHT, 'I DON'T WANT TO LIVE IN A CITY ANY MORE. I WANT TO LIVE SOMEWHERE BEAUTIFUL'"

“One of the first things I did before we bought this house was crouch down where the bed would be and make sure I could see the sea,” says Manda McGrory of her home on the Isle of Wight. Manda moved to the island from Leeds, in search of a place to raise her daughters, Bella (14) and Lily (11), and in need of a change. “I thought, ‘I don’t want to live in a city any more,’” she says. “I want to live somewhere beautiful.”

An internet search for an affordable property that could accommodate three generations of her family (her father came, too), took her to Brighstone (“The best village on the island”). With a school, library, doctor and village shop within strolling distance, and sea, downs and woodland

all around, it was just what she was looking for. Six months later, the family had moved into a 1953 Arts-and-Crafts-style house in the village.

Adept with a power drill, and having an artist’s eye, Manda soon made the house her own, pulling off that clever trick of creating a colourful interior that isn’t clamorous or shouty. “It’s about keeping the same tonal range throughout the house,” she says. “In the sitting room there are five different equally strong colours but they have the same tone, so they don’t fight.” Against this backdrop of greys, mustards and pinks sit design-classic furniture pieces, crockery picked up at local charity shops and car boots, and prints by friends.

Her practical skills were also put to good use when it came to building her studio. Needing somewhere to make the toys she sells through her »

Stormy grey walls provide a background with depth for lighter artworks and create a grown-up coastal feel





"The second I got on a skateboard I thought 'This is me'. Now I go to John Cattle's Skate Club in Wootton most days. Although I'm the only woman my age skating on the island, it's a very inclusive and friendly community so that doesn't matter at all."

johncattleskateclub.co.uk



"I go to The Village Shop in Brighstone every day. It's run by Dave Hollis, and it's been in his family for 50 years. He sells island-sourced fruit and veg. Some, like cob nuts and quince, are grown in villagers' gardens. It's a real community hub."

brighstonevillageshop.co.uk





Isle of Wight in a snapshot

A short ferry journey across the Solent from Southampton or Portsmouth, the Isle of Wight has been a holiday destination for generations. Visitors quickly discover what the locals already know: it has a rare blend of forest, downland, long stretches of sandy beaches and chalk stacks (The Needles). Popular with sailors (especially for Cowes Week and the Round the Island Race), walkers and surfers. It's a place to enjoy the outdoors, as well as a slower pace of life.



"There's always a log-burning stove going and a leather armchair to sit in at Chessell Pottery Café, Yarmouth. It's in the forest, a five-minute drive from my house and is where I head for coffee and cake."
chessellpotterycafe.co.uk





"North Street is the main street in Brighstone and, as well as thatched cottages, it has everything we need as a family, including a library, museum, doctors and a gift shop."




"I CAN LIE IN BED ON SUNDAY MORNINGS LOOKING OUT OVER OPEN FIELDS TO THE SEA"

business, Treefall Design, she constructed the shed herself from a pile of pre-cut logs, then insulated and decorated it. It is where she spends her days, listening to *Gardeners' Question Time* – "on a loop, it's educational and not too distracting" – as she stitches her woodland creatures. Explaining her business, she says: "I wanted to make something that children will play with and that will last. I've always had an interest in wildlife, so making foxes and badgers was an obvious way to go."

This love of the nature has been boosted by the move to the island. These days, she and the girls spend as much time enjoying its natural pleasures as they can. "I'm much less materialistic since

moving here," she says. "My focus was on the house when we lived in Leeds, and it was lovely, but now it's all about the outdoors for me."

This includes a new-found love of surfing and of skateboarding. "There's a group of women surfers on the island, and we also skateboard together. I skate most days. It's a good physical and mental challenge." One more reason why the move to the island was the right one. Plus, there is that view from the bedroom. "I can lie in bed on Sunday mornings listening to birdsong and looking out over open fields to the sea," she says. "What could be nicer?" 

Find Manda's creatures at treefalldesign.com.



“I always recommend that friends and family stay in one of the Airstream caravans at Vintage Vacations. The vans are in a field in the centre of the island which feels remote but isn't really: nowhere is more than a 35-minute drive away on the Isle of Wight.”
vintagevacations.co.uk