



## Coastal community

**T**he Cornish town of Falmouth attracts strong year-round footfall thanks to its range of quirky independent stores. We discover why this vibrant town is a great place to visit and do business...

FALMOUTH, PIC: LEWIS GILLINGHAM



# Creative thinking

HOW THE COASTAL TOWN OF FALMOUTH ATTRACTS SHOPPERS ALL-YEAR-ROUND WITH A VIBRANT HIGH STREET TEEMING WITH UNIQUE SHOPS AND EATERIES

**L**ocated on the south coast of Cornwall, Falmouth is a port with a purpose - a town continually shaped and influenced by its strong connection to the sea. Featured regularly by the *Sunday Times* as a perennial *Best Place to Live* and winner of the *Best Coastal Community* at the *Great British High Street Awards*, the town boasts over 200 independent outlets within three square miles and attracts around 750,000 visitors each year. It is also reputed to have the world's third deepest natural harbour and supports a number of major businesses operating on an international level.

This vibrant, entrepreneurial town is awash with opportunity; a fantastic location for doing business. This diversity of consumer options, aligned with its compelling location, vibrant year-round festivals programme and support from an award-winning Town Management Team, has attracted an impressive portfolio of quality driven

business owners.

"Falmouth has an engaging shopping offer with a mix of around 80/20 in favour of independents over multiples," says Richard Wilcox, manager at the Falmouth Business Improvement District (BID). "Businesses support the overall 'spirit of the sea' ethos and so think creatively about the offer that is tailored towards a year-round market."

In the town centre, traditional womenswear retailers sit with vintage outlets, while successful independent Cornish-owned companies like Finisterre and Seasalt tie in with the hip crowd, with innovative social media campaigns and films supporting their offer. There is also an exciting food scene, with Falmouth now being viewed as being one of the must visit foodie destinations in the south west. This has attracted the likes of Stein's to the town but the offer is more wide ranging: think tearooms by day that transform into gin palaces by night

alongside underground rum bars and speakeasies, microbreweries offering tapas and tap house, South African and Caribbean restaurants and a pub-cum-bookshop.

Wilcox says the businesses in the town help create a unique and vibrant high street: "Clever thinking, creative businesses and collaborative outlets all located in an area of stunning natural beauty makes Falmouth unique," he says. "It's the combination of the two that attracts the entrepreneurial businesses who know that their offer will need to be different, special, and creative to succeed and thrive. Furthermore, the town's strategic plans target a 12-month economy due to the three markets at play here - tourism, higher education and marine - meaning that this isn't a seasonal destination like many other coastal areas."

We speak to the owners of four indies to find out why Falmouth is a great place to run a business...

# Shopfront

THE INSIDE STORY BEHIND FOUR SUCCESS FALMOUTH INDEPENDENTS

## HENRY'S OF FALMOUTH

The Town House, 48 Arwenack Street, Falmouth, TR11 3JH

'Coast to country' store Henry's of Falmouth offers a selection of men's coastal clothing in the summer months and country styles in autumn and winter. The indie, which also operates a second store in the Cotswolds village of Moreton in Marsh, is the brainchild of former professional golfer and golf shop owner Neil Rowlands. Key brands on sale include premium countrywear labels such as Dubarry, Fairfax and Favor, Musto, Schoffel, RM Williams and Sebago.

The Falmouth store opened in 2018 following the success of Rowlands' original store in the Cotswolds. "My wife and I had been coming down to Falmouth to visit good friends of ours

and fell in love with both the town and Cornwall as a county," he says. "Our first shop was doing well and we wanted to open a second store. We spotted a stunning unit for lease in Falmouth and just went for it. We always wanted to live by the sea and Falmouth is our favourite place."

Plans for growing the business further include a third store, although the owner says he is "in no rush to do it – if the right building and location becomes available then we will consider it then."



Rowland says he is currently adding the finishing touches to the indie's new online store, which will launch some time this month.

## BLINK

29 High Street, Falmouth, TR11 2AD

Opened in 2017 by product designer Sarah Tridgell and footwear and fashion professional Norbert Benjamin, lifestyle indie Blink offers womenswear, accessories and homewares. "We wanted to showcase our expertise in a location that would not have been used to a lifestyle concept shop, to be able to offer products that have been curated by us that combine good design with sustainability as well as living and working amongst our local community," explains Tridgell.

The store focuses on small makers and craftspeople, but does also stock some well-known brands. These include the likes of One and

Eight jewellery, Native Youth, Anorak, Yokono, Mjus, Niaski and Wedgies. Meanwhile, some of its best selling products include Enamel Pins, One and Eight porcelain necklaces, Native Youth knitwear, Anorack beach mats, Bonne Maison socks and Black+Blum water bottles.

The duo decided to open the store after moving to Falmouth at a similar time for family and work commitments as well as an aspiring beach-side lifestyle after living in London. Spotting an opportunity in the town, they decided to merge their skills to create a collaboration that



would offer Falmouth something "new and a bit different."

As a new business, the pair are focused on building their customer base and product offering: "Our short term aim is to grow our online and social media presence and to continue to source interesting products," says Tridgell.

## **SECRETS BOUTIQUE**

**20 Arwenack Street, Falmouth, TR11 3JD**

Owned by former retail training manager and accountant Susan Bliss, Secrets Boutique stocks exclusive fashion labels offering stylish, relaxed and individual garments. To compliment, it also sells a range of accessories including jewellery, bags, shoes and scarves. Key brands include Masai, Robell, Adini, Capri and Nomads. Meanwhile, best selling brands are Masai and Robell.

The store itself is 35 years old and was an established business when Bliss took over in 2014. "When Secrets came on the market, the shop had already been established for over 30 years," she says. "I looked at it and six weeks later I was the happy owner of a shop. We owe much of our long standing success to our local following, which over the years has grown solely by word of mouth."

Secrets Boutique delivers a standout

customer experience to keep its customers returning. Its experienced staff offer free personal shopping sessions and some have been working at the store for over 20 years. "When you visit us in store, we aim to be a source of inspiration, helping you to choose current trends that compliment and express your style and body shape, as well as your individuality and personality," explains Bliss.

The owner says that modern



technology and internet shopping is now "the way forward" for growing the business. "With the launch of our online website we are bringing Secrets Boutique into the Twenty First Century," she says. "I would also like to see another store open within five years."

## **THE MARCH HARE**

**20 Church Street, Falmouth, TR11 3EG**

The March Hare has been stocking premium womenswear since 1964, with key labels including Frank Lyman Gina Baconi, Michaela Louisa, Doris Striec, Barbara Lebek, NYDJ and

marble Qneel.

Owner Angela Cortis has worked at the store since 1968 and bought the business in 2001. She says she has "watched it evolve from a boutique

for teenagers to what we are today: a shop catering for the fashion conscious woman." She adds: "We pride ourselves on helping our customers find the right outfit for a touch of something special."

Categories at the store include casual wear, coats, jackets, dresses, wedding outfits, evening and cruise wear while it also sells boots and accessories.

"Whether it's a wedding, evening out, special cruising holiday or simply to top up their wardrobe, we stock a wide selection of clothing including casual wear, coats and jackets," says Cortis. "We can then help customers accessorise their outfit from our lovely collection of shoes, boots, bags and jewellery."

