

# Coastal creations

Norfolk's coastline has long been a muse for artists and writers, but now it seems the sea and its surrounding landscape is an inspiration for a new creative industry. **Rachel Buller** met two women who have set up fashion and homewares businesses in the area who are determined to prove that, while our coast might be isolated geographically, it is far from being an economic backwater for those with a little entrepreneurial flair.

## GONE CRABBING

Susie Mason's eye-catching designs have transformed local clothing and giftware business Gone Crabbing into a well-known and affectionately regarded Norfolk brand – and now such is its success, her quirky coast-inspired range is popping up in resorts all over the UK. Susie, who lives in Weasenham, launched the business in 2008 after noticing a gap in the souvenir market. Wanting to find a fresh business challenge, she set about using her experience in the holiday let market to create an exciting new brand.

Inspired by many happy hours spent crabbing on Norfolk's quaysides and beaches as a child, and wanting to capture the local humour and quirky dialect, Susie set about creating her business.

She said: "Through my experience in the holiday let business, I was fully aware of the volume of people who come to Norfolk and the money they bring with them – but I felt there was a real gap in the market for good quality souvenirs. I created a few Norfolk T-shirts and everything else developed. I listened to what customers were saying and stockists' feedback, and the range just grew." >>



**Growing range:** Susie Mason (above) at her Gone Crabbing store in Dalegate Market, Burnham Deepdale.



Distinctive brand: (far left) Richard Patrick on the quay at Brancaster Staithe; a collection of souvenir items.

<< Her imaginative range now includes casual clothing, mugs – including the tongue-in-cheek "boontiful Norfolk" design – tea towels and other gifts, and the brand has a distinctive logo in Colin the Crab.

Following the popularity of the range in Norfolk, Susie created some generic coastal designs and now her products are on sale in the south west, Suffolk and the Isle of Wight. "I am a real traditionalist and love the seaside, and people have really embraced the crabbing theme.

"Importantly, it isn't something that is only unique to Norfolk – people enjoy crabbing all over the country, so as well as the business having a strong Norfolk link, it is also very much about coastal inspirations on the whole. We now have 50 stockists around the country, which is amazing. The online shop has been a really interesting research tool. A great deal of our business comes from Norfolk people as opposed to people just visiting the county from elsewhere; people here are proud of where they live."

At the beginning of April, Susie opened her first shop at the popular Dalegate

Market shopping complex in Burnham Deepdale, giving her the chance to put her whole range on display and to expand.

"We have totally outgrown my home from where we originally ran the business," laughed Susie. "Sometimes I can't really grasp the success of it all. Our turnover is doubling year on year, and sometimes I wake up and think how will I cope with all this, but my family are absolutely brilliant and so supportive

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Susie said she had always wanted to start her own business, but there was always something stopping her. "I just thought it is too easy to have an idea but not do anything about it. You have to be motivated and have a lot of support and encouragement – and it's amazing what you can achieve."

■ For more information on Gone Crabbing visit [www.gonecrabbing.co.uk](http://www.gonecrabbing.co.uk) >>