

Here to stay – Britain's

Don't hang around. If you want one of these bolt holes for summer, you'll need to act fast, says **Chris Haslam**

1 PORTHGWARRA, CORNWALL

Frankly, we didn't expect there to be a single week left at Corner Cottage, a perfect little seaside hideaway for two, but July and August have plenty of availability. Porthgwarra is a popular spot with seals and day-trippers, who come as much for the pasties at the Tea Shop as for the fabulous little beach, but after sunset you'll have the place pretty much to yourselves. Stock up on food and Cornish ale, and stay put. *Sleeps 2; from £595 a week; 01736 888515, staubynestatesholidays.co.uk*

2 PORTHALLOW, CORNWALL

Beach-lover's holiday-home selection test: stand in the ocean and look landwards. Can you see your house? If the answer's no, you've booked the wrong cottage. There's no risk of that with Chy-An-Ky-Bras, a thick-walled, whitewashed fisherman's cottage at Porthallow Cove, on the sunrise side of the Lizard. There's isn't a straight line in the house, and the kitchen is bedsit basic, but there's a pretty garden and a fab roof terrace for sundowners. *Sleeps 6; from £700 a week; 0345 268 0760, cottages4you.co.uk*

3 DEVORAN, CORNWALL

All the attractions of south Cornwall are within easy reach of Lion Cottage, but I bet you won't see many of them. The reason is the house, a three-bedroom homage to waterside living. The River Carnon dominates this property: flowing south to Restronguet Creek, it's an ever-changing byway of pleasure boats and swan traffic. Whether you're on the terrace or down on the foreshore, you won't be able to tear your eyes away. *Sleeps 4; from £1,040 a week; 01747 828170, hideaways.co.uk (ref H614)*

4 PORT ISAAC, CORNWALL

Want a Cornish beach to call your own this summer? Roscarrock Farm lies just

south of Port Isaac, with soul-stirring views across green fields and blue sea to Pentire Head. Rumps Ahead is a one-bedroom bolt hole on the farm, and if you come out of the back door, head through the farmyard and walk for a couple of hundred yards across the fields, you'll find a steep, gorse-covered valley. Follow the stream at the bottom and you'll come to the wild swimming spot at Pine Haven. Just to the left is a tiny, unnamed beach that catches the sun almost all day. It's all yours. *Sleeps 2; from £507 a week; 01326 555555, classic.co.uk*

5 WELCOMBE, DEVON

Strawberry Water, near Bideford, has a dark secret. Hidden in the woods between the hills and the sea, it has an outbuilding that used to be an S&M dungeon. Sadly – and with rather poor timing, considering the release of *Fifty Shades of Grey* – the dungeon has been converted into a party pad, and the whips and chains have been replaced by funky 1950s furnishings. The beach at Welcombe Mouth is a five-minute walk away. *Sleeps 4; from £900 a week; 01840 230990, sawdays.co.uk*

6 HALLSANDS, DEVON

Everyone likes a cottage close to the sea, but when the water is in your kitchen, you may be too close. That's what happened to the villagers of Hallsands in January 1917, when a storm washed 29 homes into the Channel. You can see what remains down by Wilson's Rock, a five-minute walk south of 1 The Coach House, a cliff-top eyrie



with magnificent views over Start Bay and the confusingly pebbly Hallsands. Kingsbridge lies nine miles away, Salcombe 15. *Sleeps 6; from £553 a week; 01548 843773, coastandcountry.co.uk*

7 ASHPRINGTON, DEVON

Imagine you're a film director and you're looking for the perfect location to make the greatest children's film of the century – a Blytonesque rewrite of the glory days of the English summer, involving boats, mysteries and ginger beer. That location is Hill Quay, a former gamekeeper's cottage deep in the woods on the banks of the Harbourn, a tributary of the Dart. It has a games room and a cosy kitchen with an Aga. The nearest beach is the sublime Blackpool Sands – six miles away – and yes, a boat is supplied. *Sleeps 8; from £908 a week; 0800 610 1122, toadhallcottages.co.uk*

8 BABBACOMBE, DEVON

So you want to be bang on the beach, but can't decide between a self-catering cottage or a smart seaside hotel? This is easily remedied with a dose of the Cary Arms, a boutique beachside inn on Babbacombe Bay. It has a great bar serving gastropub grub, a pocket-sized spa and, on the rocks above the beach, four converted fishermen's cottages with their own gardens. Pick Pebble Cottage for its superb sea views. *Sleeps 4; from £1,975 a week; 01803 327110, caryarms.co.uk*

9 HYTHE, KENT

The Upper Mill offers the best of both worlds: a rural retreat in a wonderful old watermill just half a mile from Hythe's pebble beaches. The property sits in an acre of magical gardens and has a rowing boat for messing about on the millpond, as well as swings suspended over the water. If you can tear yourself away, head southwest along this striking coastline to the salt-licked desert of Dungeness beach. *Sleeps 6; from £545 a week; 01580 720770, kentandsussexcottages.co.uk*

10 ST DOGMAELS, PEMBROKESHIRE

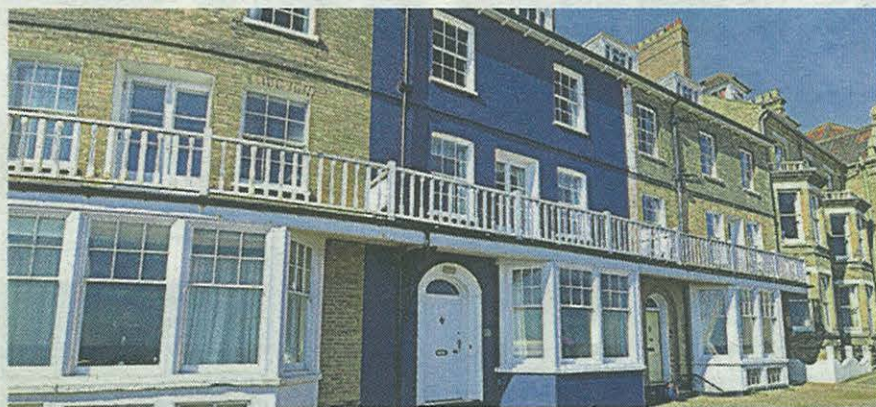
St Dogmael, since you ask, was the 6th-century monk who left his name to this pretty village on the Teifi. Riverside properties are a must-have here, and 1 Penally Boathouse Mews ticks that box. Set in the grounds of Penally House, it has a sunny south-facing terrace and gorgeous mature gardens leading down to the water's edge. The nearest beach is the vast Poppit Sands, the market town of Cardigan is a mile and a bit away, and if you're here in the first week of August, you can see Shakespeare's *Tempest* performed at St Dogmaels Abbey. *Sleeps 4; from £465 a week; 01437 772760, coastalcottages.co.uk*

11 CWMBACH, CARMARTHENSHIRE

Described by Alain de Botton as "a meticulous re-creation of an ancient farmhouse cottage, and ideal for anyone who wants to return to a vision of rural simplicity and rustic charm", Bryn Eglur



top 20 holiday cottages



Pier pressure
Left and below, Two The Crescent is on the seafront in Cromer. Bottom, the eye-catching bathroom at Yarrow Cottage, in Churchill

are this year's highlights), Cromer is a happy vestige of glory days by the seaside. It's also a good base for exploring the wilds of north Norfolk, but you need a suitably classy place to stay. Try Two The Crescent: an elegant yet family-friendly Georgian property, bang on the seafront. It has a posh kitchen and is minutes from Galton Blackiston's gourmet chippy (nolcromer.com). Sleeps 11; from £995 a week; 01263 715779, norfolkcottages.co.uk

17 NETHERGILL, NORTH YORKSHIRE

Near the headwaters of the Wharfe, in the prettiest part of the Yorkshire Dales, an eco-farm incorporating "the best of the past with the best of the present" is the fulfilment of a lifelong ambition for its owners, Chris and Fiona Clark. The result is a wonderfully green retreat, teeming with wildlife — including red squirrels — that offers fly-fishing on the Wharfe and lies right on the Dales Way. Hay Mew is their self-catering cottage. Sleeps 4; from £453 a week; 01756 761126, nethergill.co.uk

18 WHITBY, NORTH YORKSHIRE

Here's a cracking find: Pier Apartment is a newly refurbished property on the quayside, with magnificent views across the harbour to the clifftop ruins of Whitby Abbey. Quayside, which won chippy of the year in 2014, is just down the road. Whitby fish market is opposite and the beach is at the end of the street. Bold colours and modern furnishings dominate the interior. Sleeps 4; from £495 a week; 01947 600700, yorkshireholidaycottages.co.uk

19 BERWICK-UPON-TWEED, NORTHUMBERLAND

If you want to get any closer to the River Tweed than the front room of this former fisherman's shelter, you're going to need a boat. Built in 1734, Whitesand Shiel was rescued from ruin in 2013 and restored to create a romantic bolt hole, a mile upstream from Berwick's historic town centre. Our favourite feature is the sitting room in the eaves, with a glass wall offering fabulous views of the Tweed. And you don't need a car: the cottage is a 10-minute walk from Berwick station. Sleeps 2; from £700 a week; 01573 226711, www.crabtreeandcrabtree.com

20 EILEAN SHONA, SCOTLAND

South Shore Cottage is the most remote of six very remote properties on the extremely remote island of Eilean Shona, at the mouth of Loch Moidart — 35 miles west of Fort William. Leave your car at Castle Tioram, catch the boat from Dorlin pier and settle into a week of solitude. South Shore Cottage lies in the west of the island, a short walk from the turquoise Aonach lagoon, and you can forget charging that iPad: this place is off-grid. Sleeps 2; from £510 a week; 01967 431249, eileanshona.com

looks like the kind of place the three bears might go on holiday. Set in the wilds of Carmarthenshire, it was built in 1755, and the interior looks unchanged since then, with limewashed walls, an inglenook fireplace and creaky Welsh furniture. Sleeps 4; from £539 a week; 0844 500 5101, underthethatch.co.uk

12 LLANCAYO, MONMOUTHSHIRE

Everyone wants to sleep in a windmill, and they don't come much posher than the one at Llanccayo, which stands in the corner of a field off the B4598. An unloved, burnt-out wreck for much of the past two centuries, it was renovated in 2011, with a fitted kitchen and six bedrooms over five floors. The best feature, though, is the balcony on the first floor, which encircles the mill and offers soul-soothing views over the Usk Valley. Sleeps 12; from £1,410 a week; 01386 897230, ruralretreats.co.uk

13 CHURCHILL, OXFORDSHIRE

A dangerously addictive clutch of ultra-designer holiday cottages is being built in the Cotswolds' "golden

"triangle": the prime location between Cirencester, Burford and Stow-on-the-Wold. New for 2015, Yarrow Cottage is typical of the nascent strain: innocuously pretty thatched cottage on the outside, sumptuously seductive living space on the inside, with Indian and Balinese influences and a show-stopping bathroom starring a freestanding copper bath. Yes, it's all a bit OTT — but this is the Cotswolds, remember. Sleeps 4; from £1,050 a week; 020 8740 3097, beachspoke.com

14 CRICCIETH, LLYN PENINSULA

The Auction House comes with the following warning: "Taxidermy and suits of armour on display; might not appeal to everyone." But we can't think of many finer things with which to share our holidays than a stuffed ferret and a shiny helm. This baroque extravaganza, in Criccieth is delightfully bonkers throughout — from the life-sized archer to the rainbow showers and pulpit-style chairs. The one sane touch is the club-style corner bar. Sleeps 11; from £1,034 a week; 0333 254 0031, snaptrip.com (ref S13097)

15 PARWICH, PEAK DISTRICT

Parwich is an achingly pretty limestone village in some of Derbyshire's finest hiking and biking territory. The Tissington and High Peak trails are close at hand, the Limestone Way passes through the village, and Dovedale lies four miles west. Stay at the Studio, a fabulous barn conversion with a woodburning stove and a double bed on the mezzanine. The local pub, the Sycamore — also the village shop — is just up the lane. Sleeps 2 and a dog; from £399 a week; 01244 356666, sykescottages.co.uk

16 CROMER, NORFOLK

Famous for its abundant crab (stock up at Davies' Fish Shop, on Garden Street), its sandy beach and the defiantly retro Pavilion Theatre, on the pier (Basil Brush and the Barron Knights

