

Property Brief

Super Searchers!

For Helen FitzGerald, the decision to move to the West Country began as a scribble on a scrap of paper... on one of those dull Monday mornings when thoughts turn to all the things you would like to do before you get too old! It wasn't long before the scrap of paper was turning into something a little more serious, and following long discussions with her somewhat bemused husband, telephone calls to schools and house agents, the plan began to take shape.

As the couple were living and working in Sussex at the time, Helen knew that finding their new home would take a little time. Employing the services of a property-search agent would have been the smart choice, but such a luxury wasn't really something they could afford. Their requirements seemed pretty straightforward – a family house with four bedrooms in a village within five or so miles of the coast... now that couldn't be too difficult, could it? Following several visits, and viewing endless properties that looked great on the agent's details, but disappointing on closer inspection, energy levels and general enthusiasm were evaporating!

At this stage, many people can become totally demoralised, and what started out as a dream can turn into a nightmare. But, as the couple's own house was now under offer, Helen was under pressure to get on with the search, and to cut a long story short, they eventually found their new home, just four miles from Lyme Regis. So, in the summer of 1996 they moved, in time for their two children to start new schools in September.

And it was as a result of this experience, and that of many others, that Helen, together with colleague Hannah Harling, began Coastal Property Search. Helen was determined to go about property searching a little differently... to provide a first-class professional service with really sensible fees, and without smart, glossy brochures or national advertising campaigns. In fact, their most important priority was to make property-searching a luxury that nearly everyone could afford - whatever the size of the property!



Looking for a home on the coast? You don't need to do the exhausting leg work – let the experts do it for you

Today, Coastal Property Search is a thriving local business, and because of the nature of its work, is able to recommend and promote other local businesses to people moving into the area.

Key to success

The search area is relatively small – towns, villages and countryside along the magnificent Jurassic Coast. Indeed, Helen and Hannah search within the area that they know best, and it's their local knowledge that is the key to their success. Moving to a new area should be an exciting and life-changing experience, and Coastal Property Search aims to make it just that. With their energy and enthusiasm, they help their clients find 'the right property in the right place'.

And Helen and Hannah relish a challenge. One of their first clients wanted a second property – two-bedroom country cottage, with original features and a large pretty garden. Some modernisation would be acceptable. This client rejoiced at the prospect of being as far away as possible from civilisation, and the brief emphasised 'no close neighbours and absolutely no road noise'!

Part of their skill is to listen carefully to clients' needs, and in this case although they were able to shortlist three lovely (but remote) cottages, they did play devil's advocate and also showed the client a property which they considered might be more appropriate. It didn't come as a total surprise that the hunch paid off, and today this client is the proud owner of a charming, fully modernised Victorian cottage in a quiet corner of a seaside town.

It is over nine years since that dull Monday morning in Sussex when Helen began doodling on a scrap of paper... oh, how things can change! □

Coastal Property Search can be contacted on ☎01297 443891, or visit www.coastalpropertysearch.co.uk

Below Hannah - (right) with Helen, pictured above and at Lyme Regis - one of the company's search areas

