



**Publisher's Note:** After chasing corporate careers across the globe, Annabelle Hunton found herself **Living Her Dream** right here on Cape Cod. Now owner of an upscale boutique inn, her instinct for business and flair for interior design have translated into a successful and fulfilling career change.

## Platinum Pebble Boutique Inn: A Rare Find on Cape Cod

by Nicola Burnell



Photo courtesy of [Perpetually Chic](#)

When Annabelle Hunton decided she was ready for a career change she had no idea how quickly her transition would occur. A former Sales Director of Mary Kay Cosmetics, Annabelle had not worked in the hospitality industry before she purchased a sea captain's home (circa 1830s) on Belmont Road in Harwich, which had been licensed as an Inn since 1943.

Although new to the business, Annabelle wasted no time getting to work – she closed the Inn for the entire 2010 season for renovations. "I didn't want to try to run something that wasn't mine," she explains. When the Platinum Pebble Boutique Inn opened in April 2011, the formerly Victorian-styled accommodations had been transformed into a contemporary, European flavored establishment. Originally from Clapham, South London, Annabelle had spent twenty years traveling with her 'Scouse' husband, Simon, whose work took them all over the globe. When she embarked on her new career path she was looking for something they could do together. "He was away a minimum of two weeks per month. At some point we decided there's got to be more to life than this."

Identifying what they both wanted was their first challenge. "We knew we wanted to do an Inn or a B&B and were looking at different places," Annabelle recalls, citing Europe, especially Italy, as a potential location.

It was a return five-day trip to the Cape, in 2010, which confirmed that Cape Cod offered the kind of life Annabelle was looking for. "It was gorgeous weather and the Cape was much bigger than we'd remembered it. Maybe we were looking at it through different eyes, but it just seemed to be so much more than your typical American town."

She was especially excited about the variety of local bookstores, sandwich and coffee shops. "It had all of the things that are important for us in our down time."

No-one was more surprised than Annabelle when she fell in love with the last of many Inns on their realtor's list. "We'd been looking on historical Route 6A, because that's where the Inns are, then we saw this place. It had so much potential."

Neighboring businesses also impacted the decision to purchase the Inn, located within walking distance of several antique and locally-owned gift shops, Buckies Biscotti, the Ocean House restaurant and Reaching Heart Center, where Annabelle attends yoga classes. "We SO landed on our feet with where we are," she enthuses. "The neighborhood has been great for us."

The next challenge was to create a business plan that would prove successful in an area already saturated with hotels and motels. "I wrote my business plan, Simon wrote his, and we came up with the same thing."

Leaving corporate jobs to become self-employed was a huge career change for them both. "It happened so fast that we didn't have time to think about what we were actually doing. It wasn't as hard we thought it was going to be."

Annabelle navigated the purchase of the Inn from the Netherlands, where Simon was working. Flying back and forth to sign paperwork and meet with inspectors gave her the opportunity to stay at many Cape Inns. She soon discovered a gap in the market.



"You can open any magazine anywhere in the world and see a Cape Cod style; blue and white with clean lines and a vase of hydrangeas. Then you come to Cape Cod and every Inn is Victorian."

She decided that her renovations would reflect the look and style of the quintessential Cape Cod Inn she had so admired in magazines. "I had the vision immediately," she says, admitting that knocking down walls and removing bathtubs was a necessary step to reinventing the entire space. She did ensure, however, that original architectural details were not only preserved, but featured in the design to respect the history of the building.



**The Map Room blends original wooden molding with contemporary shutters**

Annabelle was thrilled to watch the architecture reveal itself once the wallpaper and curtains were removed. "The wide plank floors are just to die for! They're beautiful!"

She replaced curtains in every room with white Hunter Douglas shutters, leaving the original molding of the windows exposed. "If you open *El Décor*, in England, you see Cape Cod white shutters – but where are they over here?"

Her extensive travel experience gave Annabelle an edge on becoming the perfect host - she would give her guests what SHE wanted while traveling. "We've taken some of the best aspects of our travels and incorporated them into our own Inn."



The layout of rooms was adjusted to make them large enough to house King-sized beds, for example, and small bathtubs were replaced with large glass and tile walk-in showers. "I would rather have a nice big shower than try to squeeze a small bath tub into a room, and our older guests love being able to just walk right into the shower."

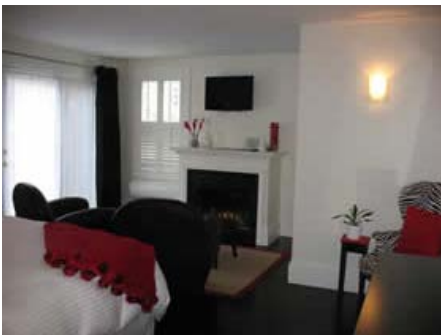
With no formal interior design training, Annabelle successfully created a sense of space and light within the antique walls of this sea captain's home. Her use of crisp lines, black and white wooden furniture, glass tables and leather seats evoke an airy atmosphere that defies the Victorian heritage of the rooms. Polished wooden floors provide a stark contrast to the soft white comforters and pillows, while luxurious bright red or black throws adorn the ends of each bed.

**Nicola Burnell** is the Publisher and a contributing writer for this magazine. She teaches novel writing and creativity development classes, Reiki and Personal Empowerment workshops. She is also a member in Letters of the National League of American Pen Women.

Nicola is offering her own writing retreats at [Casa della Quercia](#), an historic villa in Northern Tuscany, beginning May 2012.

Nicola lives in Harwich with her two sons and several pets. Visit her [blog](#) or [Email](#) her.

Perhaps the most crucial part of the business plan was to identify their market. "We expected to see more retirees here, but there are younger people, and not just in the summer, but year round. We've had guests from 21 to 80 years old!" The boutique ambiance of the inn has also drawn many Europeans.



**Deluxe Guestroom**

Annabelle's clear vision and instincts for business paid off as their first season was a huge success. With Boston and New York just a few hours away, the Platinum Pebble is attracting city dwellers in need of fresh air. "We decided to create something appealing to that demographic," Annabelle explains.

"We've picked up a lot of Bostonians and New Yorkers who are popping to the Cape for weekends. We're hoping this will continue throughout the winter months because the plan is to stay open year round and pick up people who are tired of being cooped up in their city apartments."

To this end, Annabelle is planning to install an outdoor fireplace. "Guests will be able sit outside at 4 p.m. with a cup of coffee and

still be warm. People were sitting outside in April, right after we opened, eating their breakfast in their coats because they wanted outside space."

Annabelle's is now working on picking up the Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's business. "We'd like to stretch our season; to go right through Valentine's, then pick up the April and May business, rather than starting the season in June."

She is also making every effort to be an eco-friendly Inn. Each bathroom is supplied with Monarch Eco towels, made from sustainable ESL cotton, and she participates in [Clean the World](#), an organization that distributes recycled soap products to impoverished countries.

When she joined the Cape Cod Chamber of Commerce, Annabelle discovered a new source of encouragement for her business. "There's such a community spirit on the Cape. Everybody is promoting the same thing because the biggest industry here is tourism."

Despite her goals to remain booked year round, Annabelle believes working women should make time for themselves, no matter how busy they are. "Go out for dinner or go to the theater," she suggests. "You have to go out and experience the Cape if you work here." Last summer she bought season tickets to the Cape Playhouse and only missed one show. She and Simon also frequent the restaurants they recommend to their guests.

The Platinum Pebble is more than just a Harwich Inn - it is a testament to the courage and vision of a woman who dared to follow her dream. What's truly remarkable is the fact that Annabelle took less than a year to manifest this dream.

[Click here](#) to see a slideshow of the Inn's renovations, showing dramatic before and after photographs.

To learn more about Annabelle and The Platinum Pebble Boutique Inn visit <http://www.platinumpebble.com/> or check them out on [Facebook](#)



**Annabelle Hunton**