



ACCOLADE: Ruth Rowland is presented with her Reyta for the Remarkable Self Catering category at this year's awards.



HOME FROM HOME: Some of Wolds Edge's holiday lodges.



Hideaway's secret is out

Headed north out of Pocklington towards Bishop Wilton, the roads get narrower and nature is already beginning to make its presence felt.

In the space of a few miles, glorious autumn colours – yellows and browns, flashes of gold and swathes of green – envelop the senses with a soothing balm to ease away the stresses and strains of everyday life.

Suddenly, along what has become a narrow country lane, there's a turning and you enter what I can only describe as a Wolds Wonderland.

Between the trees nestle five wooden lodges and two shepherd's huts. Welcome to Wolds Edge Holiday Lodges, on the outskirts of Bishop Wilton, winner of the 2015 Remarkable Self Catering category in Visit Hull and East Yorkshire's annual tourism awards, the Reytas (Remarkable East Yorkshire Tourism Awards).

They really are remarkable – as is the story of this "hideaway in harmony" created by Ruth and Clive Rowland. Chance brought them to East Yorkshire but now they can't imagine living anywhere else.

Roy Woodcock meets Remarkable East Yorkshire Tourism Awards winner **Ruth Rowland** to mark the launch of entries for next year's contest

Clive, a farmer, was looking to follow his first love of working with livestock as opposed to the arable crops of his native Essex when he was invited to interview for the vacant farm manager's job on the nearby Garrowby Estate, owned by Lord Halifax.

That was 15 years ago. Five years later, and with Ruth expecting her first child, her parents bought a remote holiday property, Mill Pond Lodge, in Bishop Wilton so they could visit and stay.

A few years passed and Ruth began to let the lodge out in between her parents' visits and then, suddenly, when out for a walk, came her "lightbulb moment".

Land near Mill Pond Lodge was up for sale and Ruth saw the potential to create a true holiday haven, a place of peace and tranquillity. And gradually over the past four years those luxurious lodges and quirky shepherd's huts have been unveiled.

All stand in their own secluded spots,

shielded by hedges and trees; the most noise is likely to come from the chickens (Flo, Roxy and Hilda) who scuttle around the site.

The lodges, which have Visit England four-star gold status, and "snug huts", as the shepherd's huts are referred to, are beautifully furnished and, with names such as Fairydale, Rabbitdale and Deepdale, all have been named after local dales that can be visited on local walks.

They sleep either two, three or four people but, increasingly, families and groups of friends are booking properties together. "We've even had a wedding party take over the whole site for what was a marvellous occasion," said Ruth. "We work with some great local people, including a private dining firm who were able to come in and lay on a special wedding breakfast.

Peeking into the properties I'm amazed at the attention to detail. There are paintings of local scenes by Beverley artist Martin Jones, lovely soft furnishings and each boasts its own wooden decking area plus all the mod cons you could possibly want.

Ruth even has a supply of pizza ovens and barbecues – perfect for this most relaxed alfresco dining.

One of the lodges, Honeydale, has been designed with romantic breaks in mind – super-kingsize bed, deep luxurious bath and shower and even its own hot tub.

"It's so popular, we get so many repeat bookings," Ruth says.

The shepherd's huts (or snug huts) take clamping to a whole new level and are popular for short breaks. Based on huts that shepherds would move from farm to farm during lambing season, hauled by horses or traction engines, they can sleep up to three people and with their own fridge, TV and DVD player, microwave and miniature log burner, they offer all the essentials in a quirky manor.

"We had them specially built. They really

are snug and cosy – hence we call them snug huts," says Ruth, who explained each hut had its own private shower facilities, laundry and drying room nearby.

With the Minster Way and Chalkland Way passing through Wolds Edge, and with the Wolds Way just a short distance away, it's perhaps not surprising the site is popular with walkers. A new attraction is this year is organised Nordic Walking, complete with expert guide who also offers meditation sessions.

"Winning the tourism award was so important and once it had been announced we were inundated with bookings," says Ruth. "Awards like the REYTAs make you realise that you must be doing something right but it also makes you think about what you are doing and how it can be improved."

With another luxury lodge due to open in 2016 and an, as yet, unknown "secret" plan, the Rowlands are certainly not content to rest on their laurels.

"We've been so lucky the way things have evolved; the Wolds is such a beautiful area and one that is still waiting to be discovered by many people, particularly in terms of the potential for walking. We want to do so much more in that direction."

Looking at the feedback on sites such as TripAdvisor ("absolute idyllic chill zone" and "the most relaxing week we've spent away for such a long time" are just two chosen at random) and the all-year-round bookings, it's pretty obvious Wolds Edge is hitting the spot for so many.

"We're in the middle of nowhere but in the middle of everything," says Ruth, referring to nearby attractions such as York (15 minutes by road), the coast, the Moors and, of course, the Wolds themselves.

"People come for all sorts of reasons and Christmas is always fully booked, but mainly our guests come to escape life's pressures and unwind."

As I leave, she shows me the bird boxes that have been installed near to each lodge, complete with cameras that beam the comings and goings direct to the television sets inside. These, currently, have a "to let" sign – but like the lodges I feel they'll soon be in high demand.

Brewing their way to the top

A decision to diversify taken more than a decade ago by an East Yorkshire farming family has brought brewing success, writes **Roy Woodcock**

Tom Mellor is the third generation of his family to have farmed the land on the East Yorkshire Wolds at Hunmanby Grange. But back in the early years of the millennium, with revenues from traditional crops falling, he and his wife, Gill, were looking for new ways to boost their income.

A number of factors came into play: Their farm grew, among other things, malting barley and also had a source of chalk-filtered water from a borehole on its land.

Gill, incidentally, was a horticulture graduate from Wye College, University of London, noted, she says, "for hops research".

"We had a source of pure water and grew high-quality barley, so we elected to jump on the craft brewing bandwagon and brew beer as a means of maintaining our lifestyle and taking advantage of our education, the Mellor land, and the natural assets around us," she said.

In 2003, Tom and Gill converted a barn into a microbrewery and production was 300 gallons per week – at that time it had no paid staff.

By last year, production was up to 4,300 gallons per week and last month Wold Top officially opened its new brew house that will, eventually, triple production.

With its distinctive beer names and packaging, Wold Top beers, including Wold

Gold and Wold Top Bitter, are a common sight on the shelves of all the country's major supermarkets and can claim a global following, with exports of bottled and cask beer accounting for 15 per cent of the company's turnover.

Since 2011, Wold Top has grown exports by 90 per cent.

Tom and Gill are no stranger to awards, both for their beers and their business. These have included gold medals from the Society of Independent Brewers, being named Best Small Business in last year's Hull Daily Mail Business Awards and Diversification Farmer of the Year in the 2014 British Farming Awards.

In March this year, Wold Top also received a Remarkable East Yorkshire Tourism Award (Reyta) for the best food and drink producer.

"The recognition and publicity winning awards brings is a source of immense pride," said Gill. "They are also important to the business in terms of establishing our brands. They raise awareness and give us great credibility."

She believes the Reytas are particularly important, to Wold Top and Hull and East Yorkshire as a region.

"They are a wonderful way of publicising what's happening locally and showcasing all that's good about East Yorkshire. I urge all business, large and small, to participate."



LIVING THE DREAM: Tom and Gill Mellor, of Wold Top Brewery. Picture: Simon Kench

Sir Gary Verity, chief executive of Welcome to Yorkshire, officially opened Wold Top's new brew plant which, as well as increasing its own capacity will enable them to offer contract brewing to other breweries.

He also unveiled a unique water feature made from a traditional Yorkshire Square brewing vessel, which had featured in an exhibit, co-sponsored by Wold Top and Welcome to Yorkshire, at this year's Chelsea Flower Show.

The Brewers Yard garden, of which the water feature was a central part, was awarded a silver medal and was designed to celebrate Yorkshire's beer industry and the wealth of microbreweries in the county.

It now has pride of place in the Wold Top gardens, which, as part of the National Gardens Scheme's open gardens programme,

have been visited by thousands of people. And although Wold Top Brewery has no tasting room and does not sell beer directly to consumers, the Mellor farm has become a popular venue for charity events.

From time to time, the farm and the brewery are open to visitors for a fee that goes entirely to a local charity. Based on the success of annual folk festival Moonbeams at Wold Top, the Mellors have formed an events company that will let the farm become a destination for weddings and other celebrations.

Gill said: "The Brewers Yard garden at Chelsea was a real dream come true for me. Before my husband and I embarked on the brewing journey, I trained in horticulture and garden design, so for me it's an opportunity to really return to my roots."

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