

Painter Chrissie has returned to her roots

Life writer Becky Jones talks to a Ridlington-based artist about a passion for flowers

Arriving at the Ridlington home of Chrissie Best, her passion for flowers is immediately apparent. Beautiful, bright-hued blooms border the quaint property, where, inside, each of her magnificent floral works amaze with their vibrant colours and intricate detail.

"I love painting flowers – they are just so delicate, and have marvellous colours. I like bringing out the unusual shades. Leaves are beautiful as well – they're as nice as flowers really," enthuses County Durham-born Chrissie, whose interest in painting began at a young age.

"I was good at art at school, so when I left school, I thought I would go to art college. I got a place at The Ravensbourne School in Bromley, but I never went. I got a job for the holidays and loved having my own money," she smiles.

Having got married when she was 26, Chrissie went on to spend many years bringing up her four children.

However, she never lost her passion for art, and, as a mature student, she gained a BA (Hons) in art from Canterbury College, and went into teaching.

Chrissie retired in 2000 and, after having a room in her East Sussex house converted into a studio, began painting full time.

She specialises in subjects that illustrate the beauty of nature, and has painted still life and animals, though flowers are undoubtedly her favourite theme.

Chrissie uses photos as the basis for her paintings, adding extra details to enhance the aesthetic appeal.

"I do it first in pencil, then add the paint in, then concentrate on refining each area in turn."

Describing herself as a 'slow painter', Chrissie says she is unable to paint directly from live flowers, due to their movement. However, she likes to have one to hand, to help 'bring a bit of life to the painting'.

Talking about what inspires her to paint something, she says: "If I look at something and it knocks me sideways, I know I've got to paint it."

Chrissie first started to paint in watercolour, but now her preferred medium is oils.

"Because I'm dotting about everywhere, sometimes I make a mistake. Oils dry slower than watercolours, so it's easier to change, and they're lovely and thick and creamy, so you can really build it up."

"I fiddle and fiddle until it's just right. I leave it for a few days, then come back to it and see what needs doing."

During the more clement months, Chrissie works in her garden studio, while during the colder times, her large, light kitchen/diner provides an excellent workspace.



Hibiscus (above) and Yellow Roses (below)





Cushions with irises on



Chrissie Best



Chrissie's scarf designs



Thunder the Arab horse



Parrots in Madeira

Chrissie and her husband Brian moved to their Ridlington cottage around a year ago, having fallen for the charms of Rutland when stopping over there during visits to Newcastle to see their son.

Since moving, Chrissie has discovered that she unknowingly returned to her roots.

"I phoned my cousin in Nottingham to give her our new address, and she said our granny was from there. She was married and baptised in the church. I've done research through a friend at Oakham museum, and I've got 17 relatives in the graveyard, going back to 1756.



Marigolds (above) and Pansies (below)



"Out of all the tiny villages, I picked this one – it's incredible. I've come back to my roots."

The tranquil, picturesque village certainly provides an atmosphere conducive to creativity, and Chrissie has produced a stunning range of work – each painting having taken around 60 to 80 hours to complete.

"I get 150 limited edition prints made of each painting. I rarely sell originals, but the prints are so good you can hardly tell the difference."

Chrissie now also has beautiful scarves,

greetings cards and cushions created with her designs on. The silk scarves are sold in Cavells, Oakham, while the cushions, made from crepe de chine, are available from Furleys, also in Oakham.

Chrissie's paintings will be on show in the Victoria Hall, Oakham, from July 18 to 23. She is exhibiting her work alongside that of well known Rutland photographer, Richard Adams.

Chrissie will also be selling her work at Burghley Horse Trials, September 4 to 7.

To enquire about her work, call Chrissie on 01572 823112.