



TOWN OF HARBOUR GRACE
BUSINESS OF THE WEEK

ROTHESAY HOUSE HERITAGE INN



BUSINESS PROFILE

Operated by Lynn & George Butler since 2003, **Rothesay House Heritage Inn Bed & Breakfast** has been a pillar of Harbour Grace's tourism and hospitality scene. The Inn offers four guest rooms with dining and breakfast services. With **397 positive reviews on TripAdvisor**, Rothesay House is one of Harbour Grace's most popular and must-see accommodations. A **centrepiece of Harbour Grace's Registered Heritage District**, the Inn is located in a fantastic walkable location, only a brief stop from amenities and close to the popular Conception Bay Museum.



Built in 1855 and shipped to Harbour Grace from Brigus, Rothesay House is a provincially-designated Registered Heritage Structure and one of the community's most unique architectural wonders.

Stories, history, entertainment, or just a drink on the veranda as the sun sets over the harbour—these are just a few things you can experience at Rothesay House Inn.

Interested in booking a stay? Contact Lynn & George at rothesay@nf.sympatico.ca, or visit www.rothesayhouse.com for more information.

QUESTION & ANSWER

TELL US A BIT ABOUT YOURSELF

I'm **George Butler, owner of Rothesay House Inn with my wife Lynn**. I'm originally from St. John's but have lived in Harbour Grace for the past 19 years, after spending the previous 20 in Ontario.

HOW DID YOU GET HERE?

That's a long story! Well, as I said, we **lived in Ontario for 20 years**. In 2003, we had a relative stay with us in Ontario, and they brought a copy of the Downhome Magazine with them. There's a real estate section in the back and the house was listed there. We had no real connection to Harbour Grace, but we had ambitions to move back to Newfoundland eventually. So, we visit Newfoundland in August of 2003 and take a spin to see the house. Soon enough, we're signing the purchase agreement and our return to Newfoundland is in motion. We certainly had doubts about it, but **we've been in operation for 19 years** and we're quite proud of this longevity and success.



TELL US ABOUT ROTHESAY HOUSE

Well, it's a very old house. I doubt many people in town really know the history—it's quite fascinating. Firstly, **the house gets its name from the Rothesay, a ship built by Michael Kearney at Harbour Grace for merchant John Munn (above)**.

Originally, **the house was built in Brigus in 1855** for a marriage between the Mundens and the Munns, two powerful Conception Bay merchant families. The house later passed to Robert Stewart Munn II. In 1906, after Munn's marriage to Elizabeth Trapnell, he had the house **shipped by schooner to Harbour Grace**. That move caused some architectural changes—for instance, the corner tower was an addition after the move. The Godden family lived her for a few decades, and we acquired it in 2003. It's a great example of **Queen Anne architecture in Harbour Grace**, and that garage—well, that housed the first car here in the community. The house was **officially registered by the province's Heritage NL in 2005**.



YOUR MOST INTERESTING GUEST?

Oh goodness, too many to name probably. We've had plenty of athletes—NHLers, basketball players, football players, etc. The **actress Susan Clark** stayed here once—she once appeared as Amelia Earhart in a film (pictured, right). And of course, those on the local circuit, Buddy Whatisname, Christopher Pratt, people like that. We had a guy from Antique Roadshow who was just floored by our **Michele Renault painting of the Rothesay** (pictured on page 2). We held artists retreats for years and those were always memorable experiences.



WHAT EXCITES YOU ABOUT THE BUSINESS

Honestly, **the guests and their experiences are the biggest rewards.** I mean, sure, the guests get a lot out of this place, but I think we get as much in return. We get to share our stories, they share theirs, and if we can help make somebody have a truly memorable experience in Harbour Grace and Conception Bay, that's a great reward. I think our reviews really showcase how much we put into crafting an exceptional visitor experience for guests.

HAS 'COME HOME 2022' BEEN A BOOST?

I think it's **geared toward a different market than ours.** These initiatives by the province seem catered to the domestic market—ie., Newfoundlanders 'coming home'—rather than new visitors, those from western Canada, the United States, and Europe. Those are our primary clientele. If 'Come Home' is an attraction, that's usually coming home and staying with family, etc. You **might see a boost for short-term Air BnB rentals, but not for mom-and-pop bed & breakfasts.**

The biggest thing is the **rental car issue—that's a serious issue** right now for hospitality businesses. I've had cancellations from Switzerland, Germany, and South Africa just in the past week alone, all because they couldn't get a rental vehicle. And the province will point to traffic statistics on the Marine Atlantic ferry—again, different clientele. That's not representative of what we're seeing, what John & Peggy Fisher (Fishers' Loft, Port Rexton) are seeing. It's a problem that needs a long-term, realistic solution.





WHY HARBOUR GRACE?

Well, as I said earlier, we never had any formal connection to Harbour Grace. But once you get here, it's like, "**Wow, the history here is phenomenal on a national level.**" The people who come here are blown away when they hear some of the stories. Last weekend, when we had the Ninety-Nines visit, they had a total blast. You have people telling you they want to move to Newfoundland after weekends like that.

However, I still think we have **plenty of untapped potential** here. I mean, look at the District—the **first Registered Heritage District in Newfoundland**, designated in 1992. Has much changed in my time here? Not particularly. However, some of the projects we're hearing about—the Yellowbelly restorations, the Town's ongoing development plan for the District (pictured, above)—have us excited again. I suppose we're **on the cusp of something unique potentially**, but the proof will be in the pudding. I'm cautiously optimistic. The Town's strategic plan is giving some useful direction and that's important for any long-term success.

WANT YOUR BUSINESS FEATURED?

If you want to be featured as our 'Business of the Week', contact Matthew at (709) 596-3631 ext. 4, or email matthewmccarthy@hrgrace.ca.

