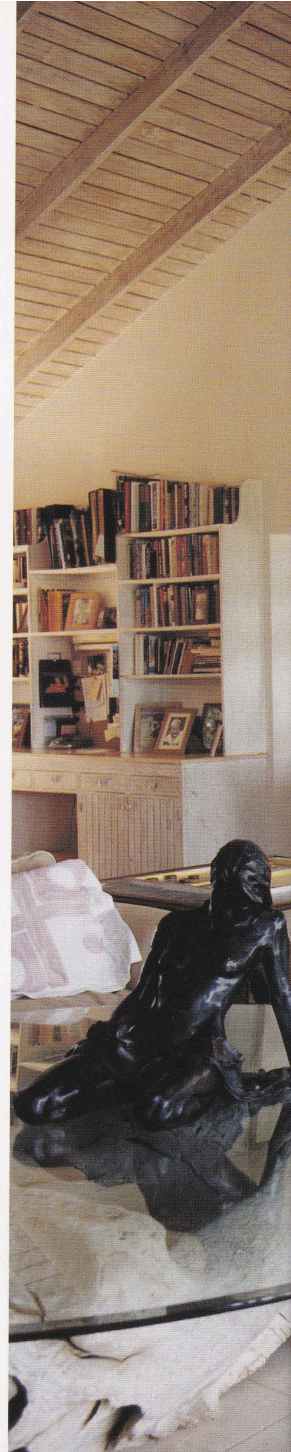




## insiderlifestyle

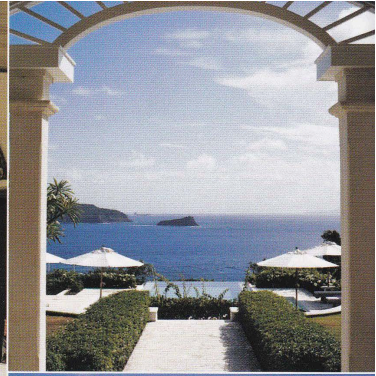
CAROLINE CLIFTON-MOGG visits Michael and Lotty Bunbury, Mustique-based doctor and beachwear designer



Michael and Lotty Bunbury live on Mustique with their four children. When Michael does the school run, he drives Madeleine, Jemima and friend Max Ernst (opposite above, from left) in the island ambulance. Outside school, the children spend as much time as possible on the beach - or in mud pools (opposite below). Michael and Lotty's house (main picture) is loosely open plan. Against a neutral background, books inject accents of colour. A large coffee table with a driftwood base was made on the island; on it is a bronze sculpture by Lotty's sister Eleanor Cardozo. The Bunburys have two dogs, Poppy and Daisy



insiderlifestyle





Colin Tennant set about creating an 'earthly paradise' and devised an eccentric but very attractive plan

As you walk through the oversized bamboo hut that constitutes Mustique Airport, your eye is caught by book-filled shelves on the wall beside the customs bench. Closer inspection reveals these to be the 'airport library', where residents and guests donate and borrow all manner of books, from biographies to bodice-rippers. It's an endearing idea that in many ways sums up life on the island of Mustique, a place which, dogged by clichés – 'millionaires' playground', 'refuge of royals-and-rock stars' spring to mind – is in fact a busy, self-sufficient community.

To understand Mustique, you have first to understand its creator, Colin Tennant – or at least, to understand his very particular, often eccentric vision. In 1953, Tennant went to Trinidad, partly to look at some property that had belonged to his family since the 1850s, but visited so rarely that neither his grandfather nor father had ever even met their estate managers. Tennant was much taken by the lotus-eating culture of the West Indies, and after selling the last remaining Trinidadian estate in 1958, he went to see an island in the Grenadines which he had heard was for sale: it was Mustique, a three-mile-long island with no fresh water, jetty, or roads, but millions of mosquitoes. He bought it.

Following an unsuccessful attempt to grow cotton on the island, by the mid-Sixties Colin Tennant found himself, almost by default, in the property-development business – encouraged perhaps by the

acceptance, in 1960, by the newly married Princess Margaret of his wedding gift of a plot of land on Mustique. In 1968, Colin formed the Mustique Company to develop and administer the island. He set about turning it into an 'earthly paradise' minus the mosquitoes, and devised an eccentric but ultimately very attractive plan for the development of the island. He oversaw everything from the siting and design of the fishermen's huts to the layout and extent of the property plots. With the assistance of people such as Oliver Messel, stage designer-turned-architect, and Arne Hasselqvist, contractor-turned-builder, the first houses, including Princess Margaret's *Les Jolies Eaux*, soon began to rise from the arid scrub. For the first decade, the island was still very much 'Tennant's Territory'; some people he invited to buy plots, others he vetoed, and there were dinners, picnics, parties, all season long. And although in 1976 he sold 60 per cent of the Mustique Company to a consortium of owners, and now has little financial involvement with Mustique, his vision still remains of a perfect Caribbean island, with its majestic palms (which he planted 40 years ago), its white sands, blue seas and equable temperatures, a *Toy Town-sur-Mer* where life is charmed and charming.

Island life is absurdly rich – there cannot be many small islands where over 40 butlers are privately employed – and while most of the houses are luxurious, many are palatial. Some are designed in the Caribbean 'gingerbread' style championed by Oliver Messel, >

OPPOSITE *Les Jolies Eaux*, originally designed for Princess Margaret, is a classically inspired single-storey house flanked by pavilions. The house leads to a shaded veranda, which gives on to a terrace and the infinity swimming pool. Beyond, views stretch towards the sea. The interior (top left) was decorated by Patricia Hillstrom. In Princess Margaret's bedroom (bottom right), the bed's fretwork canopy recalls the work of Oliver Messel. THIS PAGE Mustique's shops (left) follow Oliver Messel's 'Caribbean gingerbread' style. In the garden of the library is a rotunda reading room (right)



Lotty's swirling, subtle hand-printed designs are made up into heavy silk and airy chiffon sarongs and kaftans



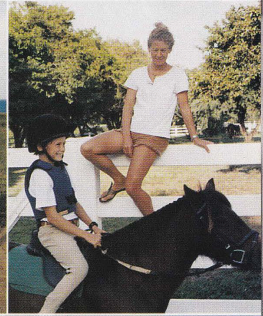
others are flights of fancy that verge on the surreal, ranging from Maharajahs' mansions to Palladian palaces. Many owners, including the new owners of Les Jolies Eaux, let their houses when they are not in residence; in season there are still, as there were 30 years ago, parties every day – the 40 butlers are kept busy indeed.

But there is also a very real life on Mustique. There are two schools, a 7,000-book library which was funded and endowed by one of the residents, the publisher Felix Dennis, as well as a busy medical clinic, all housed in painted clapboard bungalows. In what approximates to the town centre, along Britannia Beach, is Johanna Alexander's fashionable Treasure Boutique, the eponymous Basil's Bar, built on a jetty that extends out over the water, the charmingly named Sweetie Pie Bakery, a general food shop and a fish market on the beach. And this is Mustique's real charm – that for all the high life and big houses, the island today is also a busy, integrated community, with everything you need in perfect and most miniature form.

No one knows this better than Lotty Bunbury, the wife of the island doctor, Michael, and the creative genius behind the hugely successful Lotty B designs – swirling, subtle hand-printed designs made up into heavy silk and airy chiffon sarongs, kimonos, kaftans and camisoles that are sold in Treasure Boutique, as well as in Barbados, New York and London. Lotty B is almost a one-woman industry. At many island parties her chiffon shirts, long and short sarongs and kaftans are almost obligatory.

Lotty studied glass painting at Chelsea College of Art & Design, but when Michael decided to come to Mustique as the island doctor on a one-year contract (13 years ago), she decided that the glass-painting equipment was too cumbersome to transport. Instead she packed a few pieces of silk and some silk-screen paints. And that, as they say, was that. >

Lotty designs silk-screen-printed sarongs and kaftans (above left). She paints each prototype (above right) and makes up a toile at home, before sending both to China where the finished clothes (left) are made



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE LEFT Much Mustique life is lived outdoors: brightly coloured fishing boats are moored off the beach. Basil's Bar looks towards the sunset. Lotty gives Madeleine a riding lesson at the Mustique Equestrian Centre; and buys a barracuda from a local fisherman. Madeleine and Jemima take Rosemary the duck for a swim, transporting her in her basket



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE LEFT Michael and Lotty have lunch with friends on Macaroni Beach. Madeleine and Jemima take Poppy out in a kayak. When the children are at school, Lotty is able to spend occasional afternoons sketching and painting on the beach; island life provides inspiration for the clothes she produces under Lotty B designs

At the time, the sarong was becoming the essential beach and après-sun item. Lotty began by painting some of her designs, inspired by tropical life, on to pieces of sarong-size silk. They were an instant hit, but success brought its own problems: 'Every one was done to commission, and was incredibly laborious; I had three small children who liked to play around and beneath the silk-screen frame. Of course, one jolt – and there were some – and the whole thing was ruined and all my work lost.'

It was time to move on: Lotty began to develop ways of producing more pieces more quickly. Now she first sketches her new ideas, then paints each design on to silk screens, which in turn are sent to China to be hand-printed and made up into sarongs and kaftans.

'For the kaftans, I sketch a style, make it up in heavy cotton and send it to the manufacturers along with the print design. I have always been a seamstress – when I was 12, my grandmother bought me a sewing machine and I took it with me to school where I used it at weekends. My elder sister went to a lot of dances at the time, and needed ball gowns; I made them, and that stood me in good stead. These days I don't do so much dressmaking; I seem to have so many other things to do.'

Other things to do include Michael and Lotty's four children – Freddy, 12, Fabian, 11, Madeleine, 10, and Jemima, 7. The boys are at school in England, but the girls remain on the island; Jemima is taught partly at home and partly at the local school, while Madeleine's schoolroom is on the edge of a small white-sand cove. If Michael is on duty, the school run is often made in the island ambulance. Home life revolves, to some extent, round the pets (Madeleine and Jemima love their animals); not only are there the two dogs, Poppy and Daisy, and the cat, Ebony, there also is the tame dove, Pretzel, as well as Rosemary the duck, whom Madeleine regularly carries in a shopping basket to a pond nearby to swim. If ever there were a perfect place to grow up, Mustique must be it.

And although life is not so free of responsibility for the girls' parents, there are compensations for a busy life. 'Michael is the only doctor, responsible for the whole island, and is on 24-hour call – including weekends. Although he gets six weeks' holiday, we tend not to go away much; family and friends are what are important, and so we try to make the most of island life, and particularly beach life. By staying here when he isn't working, Michael is able to take part in the life that usually goes on around him.' So there are picnics with friends, swimming, boating and riding, as well, of course, as parties large and small all over the island. On Mustique, the party spirit continues – just as Colin Tennant always intended □

Caroline Clifton-Mogg and Rory Carnegie travelled to Mustique with Carrier (tel: 0161-491 4620, website: [www.carrier.co.uk](http://www.carrier.co.uk)), the luxury tour operator, which features The Cotton House hotel and several Mustique private villas in its Caribbean programme, with charter flights through Grenadine Airways. Les Jolies Eaux is available to rent through Mustique Villa Rentals (tel: 01628-583517, website: [www.mustique-island.com](http://www.mustique-island.com)); it costs from £13,600 a week.

● Lotty B (website: [www.lottybunbury.com](http://www.lottybunbury.com)). Available in the UK at Musa, 31 Holland Street, W8 (tel: 020-7937 6282)

