



**10 Castle Street**  
**Raiomond Mirza**  
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If you like your private clubs to seduce you with art, coddle you with canopy'd beds and have free wifi that actually works, 10 Castle Street is for you.

It began life in 1705 as a well heeled family pile. It was ultimately worked over by Lewis Tregonwell, a Captain of the Dorset Rangers. He hunted smugglers and moved comfortably amongst "the quality" but was not himself, silver-spooned at birth. He also had no small ambitions - he founded Bournemouth. To this day, the present owners, Alexander and Gretchen Boon have preserved that very finely balanced original potpourri of nobility, secret treasure and entrepreneurial edge.



When you turn into the gates off a modest, unimposing village street you are greeted by an unlikely spread beginning with converted stables. You're just surprised that such a big property was tucked away on such a commonplace road. You proceed down a longish drive to the Palladian manor which Thomas Hardy very likely eyeballed when he wrote *Tess Of The D'Urbervilles*. If you are on foot you will be first greeted by the Boon's acrobatically friendly pooch, Lala. She will lie on her back and you will rub her tummy (she asks so politely you'll feel oafish if you don't). Lala is not a one off. 10 Castle street welcomes dog lovers and even offers luxury dog beds.

The art begins just outside the front entrance with Sylph, an ethereal, balletic sculpture by Simon Gudgeon made of bronze leaves. It continues within until the realisation gently seeps in like 40 year old port warming the bloodstream on a winter's night; this isn't a club with art. It's an art gallery with rooms and a restaurant. There are literally hundreds of original works and all for sale if you desire to take one home. Paintings, carvings, mixed media, you name it, they probably have it, and are likely on a first name basis with the artist.



All well and fine so far. The place is clearly a feast for dog owning art lovers, but what about the rest of us? What, you must quite reasonably be asking, is the actual experience of the club? The facilities, the kitchen and above all, the service?

There is a friendly, well stocked bar that includes boutique Japanese whiskey and Cuban cigars. The restaurant has comfortable seating that is spread out enough to encourage private conversation. The menu offers sufficient variety, ranging from moules frites to a very respectable burger. The chicken and chilli pasta may be a bit too on the nose (it's literally that and nothing else) but you won't leave hungry. The portions are generous. The chefs equally talented at breakfast and dinner and the wine list offers the odd adventurous escapade – Romanian Chardonnay anyone?

There are a handful of quiet dens with intimate sofas, comfy chairs and tables. There are power points everywhere and as mentioned, the wifi really does work. It's worth repeating as more than a few clubs let the side down when it comes to this fundamental 21st century feature. Meetings here will be productive and elegantly situated amongst stimulatingly curated artistry and hand drawn wall paper.

Fine, fine, fine, we hear you sigh. But the people, what about the flesh and blood inhabitants? If we were to pick on the finest point for improvement it would be that the cheque could have arrived sooner but, quite frankly, that's about it. The staff are uniformly polite and efficient without being obsequious or, more maddeningly, mistaking themselves for the clientele. We can't count the number of private clubs where the coat check girl deigns to carry out her duties because she's simply biding time until she can convince her favourite club member i.e. her future husband of the benefits of divorcing his current ball and chain. No, none of that at 10 Castle.

The bedrooms are high ceilinged and well appointed with coffee table books and loungers. The bathrooms are spacious and the shower heads are the size of a dinner plate. The surrounding grounds are gloriously green and inventively landscaped without being manicured to within an inch of their life.

Alexander and Gretchen have balanced expectation with surprise. There is everything you want in a club and an unexpected twist. The green velvet pool table with a long horn skull mounted on the window sill is as good an example as any.



At some point soon they'll have completed and opened the spa. If it follows suit, expectations are high.

In short, "Pleasing in every aspect" is how P.G. Wodehouse might have described the place if he were a yellow skirt wearing London DJ named Princess Julia in an original painting by Ben Ashton. You'll find her hanging on a wall above a staircase.