Call me a fanciful idiat, but whenever I visit the Island by way of the Lymington-Yarmouth ferry, I look at the silhouette of the glorious Isle of Wight opening up before me and I think, “It’s a book! It’s like an open book!”

From 1853 until his death in 1892, Tennyson was the main home of the renowned Victorian poet Alfred, Lord Tennyson. In this secluded spot on the Isle of Wight the new Poet Laureate produced some of his most famous works. Musidora was composed in the attic, Enoch Arden in the summer house and Idylls of the King in the library. Farringford also attracted many of Tennyson’s eminent friends, becoming a locus of literary and artistic activity.

The writers Lewis Carroll, Edward Lear, Charles Kingsley, William Allingham, Coventry Patmore and Henry Longfellow were among many accomplished visitors.

Since 2012 this dramatic Gothic house has been particularly restored and decorated in a late 19th-century style that reflects the Tennysons’ tastes and interests. The grounds have also been returned to their authentic Tennyson-era appearance, complete with enchanting walled garden.

Farringford is now open to the public as an historic home. Holidaymakers also have the opportunity to enjoy a stay in our self-catering accommodation, situated in the house and grounds. Please visit farringford.co.uk to book a trip and learn more about Tennyson, his circle and the enduring appeal of his magnificent poetry.

Travel around the Island without a car and you’ll discover so much more. We have miles of footpaths, cycle and bridleways, an excellent bus network and our own unique train line.

To find out more about travel, accommodation, things to do and places to eat and drink go to visitisleofwight.co.uk
Isabel Ashdown uses the whole of the Isle of Wight.

It is believed that Charles Darwin began Origin of the Species while on holiday on the Isle of Wight where he stayed at the seaside. The American poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow visited in 1868 where he wrote a poem for the fountain outside Osborne House.

In 1831 Jane Austen visited Shanklin and wrote: “We hired a sociable and drove round...Shanklin Chine, lovely.”

Shanklin
A popular tourist destination for 200 years, Shanklin Chine was opened to the public in 1817. The Old Village near the Chine was a regular haunt of the poet John Keats. Today you can dine and stay in the house he rented – Keats Cottage. The American poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow visited in 1868 where he wrote a poem for the fountain outside The Crab Inn.

In 1831 Jane Austen visited Shanklin and wrote: “We hired a sociable and drove round...Shanklin Chine, lovely.”

Cowes
With its stunning sea views and annual yachting regattas Cowes has been an inspiration to Alan Titchmarsh, TV presenter and author who lives in the town. He set his novel ‘Rose’ (2004) partly in Gurnard and Thorncroft Bay.

In 1793 it is believed the poet William Wordsworth inspected the Napoleonic Rocks at Cowes.

Newport and Carisbrooke
When imprisoned in Carisbrooke Castle in 1648, King Charles I was inspired to write poetry. Charles Kingsley wrote The Water Babies (1863) after reading the true story of child chimney sweep Valentine Gray. Today you can see the memorial to Gray in Church Lane, Newport.

Novelist Patrick Gale was born on the Island in 1962. His father Lockwood designed the Durbar Room at Osborne.

1. Freshwater
The scenery of the Isle of Wight so inspired the poet Laureate, Alfred, Lord Tennyson that he made his home at Farnley Hall, Freshwater in the 1850s as a tranquil escape from his fame. Tennyson’s ‘Freshwater Circle’ grew and included Lewis Carroll, Edward Lear and William Allingham as well as other artists including Victorian photographic pioneer Julia Margaret Cameron. Playwright George Bernard Shaw and his new wife honeymooned at Ocean View, Coastguard Lane, Freshwater in 1891.

The lure of Freshwater continued into the 20th century. Author Virginia Woolf (great niece of Julia Margaret Cameron) stayed at her house, Dombles and created a plot ‘Freshwater’ – a Comedy based on the Freshwater Circle. DJ Lawrence stayed at Freshwater Bay in 1909 and went on to use the location in his novels.

More recently, Lynne Truss lived in and wrote about Freshwater for her novel Tennyson’s Gift in 1996. She calls ‘Freshwater’ her favourite word.

2. East Cowes
A quiet district, Queen Victoria was inspired by stays at her holiday home Osborne House. Edward Lear, member of the Freshwater Circle, visited the monarch there to teach her drawing.

After WW1 Osborne was a convalescence home. Poet Robert Graves and author AA Milne met there and became friends.

3. Sandown
Lewis Carroll (Charles Dodgson) took holidays in Sandown. It was here, in 1871, he began writing his nonsense poem The Hunting of the Snark.

It is believed that Charles Darwin began Origin of the Species at the Ocean View Hotel, High Street, Sandown in 1858.

Isabel Ashdown uses the whole of the Isle of Wight for inspiration for her novels. Her book The Summer of ’76 (2013) was set in Sandown.

4. Ventnor
Before Tennyson arrived on the Isle of Wight, Charles Dickens rented Winterbourne, Bonchurch in 1849. Here he began the novel David Copperfield. He wrote to his wife “It is the prettiest place I ever saw in my life.”

Post Algerman Swinhem grew up at East Dean, Bonchurch and is buried at St Boniface Church, Bonchurch. His funeral was a major event. One newspaper reported “flowers...stamped the pavement and violets in search of a convenient point of view”.

Thomas Hardy travelled to the island to visit Swinhem’s grave in 1930. A regular to the Isle of Wight for health reasons, Karl Marx visited the island a number of times. His favourite place for a walk was Ventnor Downs.

5. Ryde
The home town of Oscar-winning screen writer and director (The English Patient 1996) Anthony Minghella. Minghella’s creativity was inspired by walking on the sands of Ryde with his grandmother. Ryde was also where he directed his first film “A Little Like Drowning.”

Other visitors to Ryde included poet and illustrator Edward Lear, who wrote a limerick about Ryde in 1846, and Karl Marx who stayed in Nelson Street in 1874.

Respected music journalist Philip Norman grew up in Ryde and wrote Babybalm Night, a nostalgic memoir of his life of Wight childhood – his father ran the entertainments on Ryde Pier in the 1950s.

6. Seaview
In 1754, author Eliza Bylton and her husband stayed in a cottage in Seaview, a pretty sailing village along the coast from Ryde.

7. Chillerton
In 1891. His father Lockwood designed the Durbar Room at Osborne.

8. Lake
Crime writers Bob and Carol Bridgestock lived in Lake. Together, under the name R.C. Bridgestock, they publish detective novels and are consultants to the TV series ‘Happy Valley’.

9. Newchurch
On the road from the Village Green to the Church, Newchurch stands at the point where the aisle by which Charles Kingsley wrote ‘The Water Babies’ (1863) is named after local author John Keats. Today you can see the memorial to Gray in Church Lane, Newport.

10. Havestreet

11. The Needles
Author Isabel Ashdown stays close to the Island’s iconic attraction when working on her novels.

12. Children’s Authors
Lewis Carroll is not the only author to take inspiration from the Island for his characters.

There are plenty of children’s authors and illustrators who live, write and publish surrounded by sea including, Judie Hannon and Zoe Sader.

Many base their stories on the Isle of Wight like Frank Ferrielli’s Sailor 3rd series, and Philip and Eleanor Bell of island-based publisher Beach Books, whose Jack and Boo picture books of fossils and dinosaurs, wild cats and beaches, mirror the island’s unique landscape.

Karen Larrow, who won the 2017 Blue Peter Book Award for her fantasy tale about a warrior rabbit, Podkin One-Ear, also lives on the Island.

The Needles
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