

**HANDS ON...**

**HIS FAVOURITE FOOD**



**'Seafood platter, poached salmon, Guernsey new potatoes, Guernsey butter, asparagus... and a bottle of Montrachet'**

**DRIVING**



**'I must be one of the few people here who sticks below the 25mph limit... It sends my wife and children crazy'**

**MUSIC**



**'I suppose now my general preference is for "Coldplay with attitude" and I really enjoy karaoke'**

**LEISURE**



**'Guernsey itself is more beautiful than I expected... the cliff walks in particular are stunning'**



Guy Hands on the terrace outside his penthouse offices. (5444371)

A 25mph speed limit suits Guy Hands. He drives so slowly it sends his wife and kids crazy, worries about Guernsey's diminishing transport links and loves karaoke and 'Coldplay with attitude'. Living here suits the international private equity whiz - not least because he's getting more than four hours' sleep a night and has rediscovered weekends. Over fish, chips and mushy peas in his penthouse office, he spoke to **Kay Leslie** about his work ethic, how he relaxes and the importance of treating staff well

**I**T MIGHT seem a surprising choice for an international private equity figure, but with bought-in fish, chips and mushy peas to enjoy in his penthouse office, Guy Hands is happy to take time out and soak up the east coast view. While profiles often portray him as a competitive 'swashbuckling' workaholic, the man himself exudes an easy charm and says 'the Guernsey effect' is helping him to arrange a better work/life balance. 'Work/life' in Hands' terms, however, still means more than double the hours of any normal corporate week and the need for a team of PAs to work in shifts so that he can dictate action points and reports at 3am, or whenever the mood takes him. With his company, Terra Firma, initiating the investment of billions of pounds in businesses ranging from renewable energy to garden centres, it is perhaps not surprising that business occupies much of his life. Terra Firma's existing funds are fully invested, so he is planning to raise further amounts that will enable the acquisition of companies worth up to €1bn. 'During the week it is absolutely all about work, but I'm getting better at doing less work at weekends. Guernsey gives me time to think and that is crucially important. Clients pay me to think, not to get wrapped up in all the other aspects of Terra Firma's day-to-day business.' Hands' work ethic was developed at Goldman Sachs. 'You were expected to regularly work 14 hours a day and didn't really get any holiday. Your social life was with your colleagues. It was a good, but tough, place to start a career.' He is pleased that, since moving to Guernsey, he has managed to keep weekends mainly free. 'There isn't the temptation to pop into

London for a meeting at weekends and end up staying and working for much longer. In Guernsey I tend to work on Sunday evenings, but am pretty well free the rest of the weekend. I thought coming here would change my life and, while I haven't quite achieved as much personal time as I want, it is still far better than it was.' A love of good food brings with it, he said, the need to watch his weight and work on his fitness. 'I do yoga and pilates and some physical training. I thought I would spend a lot more time doing photography and listening to music, but in reality I'm doing more eating and socialising,' he said contentedly. Hands describes himself as a sociable person who loves Guernsey's relaxed scene. 'The island has an incredibly social population and I like the relaxed style of getting together with friends - it's not a pretentious place. Guernsey itself is more beautiful than I expected and it has been very enjoyable getting to know different parts of it better. The cliff walks in particular are stunning.' He likes 'the Guernsey effect' and has no intention of moving on. 'My wife, Julia, and my four children all come here regularly, along with other family members, and it is a fantastic place for all of us. We love it.' His wife now also has the added business connection of ownership of the St Pierre Park Hotel. **W**hen we met, Hands had just emerged from an intense five-hour board meeting without breaks, but he instantly launched into an entertaining summary of life, loves and beliefs, while also sharing a recipe for ginger tea. Apparently open and uncomplicated, it soon becomes clear that he applies careful thought to just about everything, from

deciding which position to adopt for the interview ('Side on: it's less intimidating than staring directly across at you') to considering what his favourite meal would be: 'Seafood platter, poached salmon, Guernsey new potatoes, Guernsey butter, asparagus and a bottle of Montrachet.' He places importance on looking after his team and has utilised leading US management consultancy firm McKinsey since 1996 to help organise and manage them in a way that improves interpersonal relationships. 'It's important to treat people well at work. It is interesting how the work environment has changed over the years. We were the hard men and women in black suits, but we have moved on and become softer. Now we are more pastel than black,' he points out. He says it is important to remember 'that most business leaders are motivated by success, but people in general are motivated by many different things. In a supermarket, for example, the staff are not motivated by financial compensation, but by social interaction. You have to be very careful that you allow those social interactions.'

**H**e recalls vividly how important mixing with other youngsters was when he was a pupil. 'I hated school, but loved the journey. I used to catch the train and there was a whole crowd of us aged 11-18, boys and girls. I loved it. I remember one time that a crowd of us went out to celebrate the end of exams and it ended up with 15 girls at a swimming pool and me. Brilliant!' He says he isn't sure how he fitted in with the other children. 'I loved photography and also sold ornaments and calendars. The ornaments were fairly hideous but sold well. I also did wedding and school photography. I was

very much the odd one out but I had a lot of female friends.' He is unpretentious and disinterested in flashy accessories. 'I drive a six-year-old Land Rover and am happiest at home in the garden with the family if I'm trying to relax.' His driving style is a source of family tension: 'Guernsey is perfect for me because I drive everywhere very slowly. It sends my wife and children crazy. I must be one of the few people here who sticks below the 25mph limit on the coast,' he laughed. **H**ands is an avid philanthropist; he and Julia recently pledged a £2m donation to his old Oxford college, Mansfield. The money will go towards erecting a building that will house the university's new human rights centre. 'I am very aware right now of the number of people in the world who do not have basic human rights. I don't mean the ones that we argue about in Western democracies that often border on political correctness; I mean the basic right to live without fear of persecution or oppression.' He keeps up with the news from multiple sources and sees it as an important part of his daily life. As a severe dyslexic, he prefers watching or listening to reports rather than reading them and he watches news programmes in English from around the globe, particularly from Russia, the US and China, with Germany and France also on the list. He loves music and listens to it at home (though not as often as he'd like). His well-documented wrangle over EMI has not reduced that passion. 'I don't listen while working because that would require a degree of multi-tasking and I can't do that,' he laughed. 'My interests have changed in line with my age

- Pink Floyd and then punk, then Blondie, through to today. I suppose now my general preference is for "Coldplay with attitude" and I really enjoy karaoke.' **A**dmitting that he misses Julia and his family greatly, the only other downside of life here is that he does not go to the opera as often, and he hates getting delayed by fog or bad weather when travelling. 'One thing I didn't expect is just how difficult travel can be at times. I never thought about getting stuck here but it has happened a few times. I am now obsessed with the weather forecast.' He has strong concerns about the island's transport links: 'They are worse than when I moved here and that is a real worry.' Total relaxation is achieved outdoors: 'I love designing gardens and it's been a steep learning curve here. I now know why people on the west coast don't plant some things... put them in and the salty gales demolish them in no time. 'The garden was well-planted when we bought the house but I wanted more colour and separate areas of interest. The current project is a Japanese garden.' Reviewing his time here so far, he said: 'By the time I left the UK in 2009, I had reached a point of not getting enough time to think. Literally, I was going from one meeting to the next. The diary was completely packed... I hardly had time to go to the loo. Meetings ran into calls, then more meetings - I often worked from 6am until midnight. It was very challenging and exhausting. 'I have tried to sleep more in Guernsey - from four hours a night to six or seven, and I usually manage that. It's a good result, although I do still occasionally feel the need to do some work at 3am. 'Generally, though, my mood these days is definitely more Adele than Patti Smith.'



Guy with his wife, Julia.

**'My wife, Julia, and my four children all come here regularly, along with other family members, and it is a fantastic place for all of us. We love it'**

**HANDS ON...**

**SLEEP**



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**PHILANTHROPY**



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