

# The Rurbanist

**Carl Hester**, Olympic Dressage gold medalist in London 2012, didn't grow up in a horsey family



Carl Hester

**I grew up** in Sark, in the Channel Islands, and I can only say that it was an idyllic, beautiful and gorgeous place to be brought up. There are 600 people there, no cars and it's got a lovely climate. **My biological father**, Anthony Smee, was an actor. I went to stay with him once when I was a teenager. He lived in Chiswick and I came from an island with no light, no noise. It was a hell of a shock, I could only stay in his flat for two nights. It was so orange. I didn't sleep for 48 hours. **I had double pneumonia** when I was two years old. I can remember looking out at everyone from the oxygen tent and wetting the bed because nobody would get me out. **I come from** a non-horsey family. When I was four I walked into a field with a horse and it picked me up by the hair. You would think that would put me off horses for life, but it did me no harm at all and I've loved them ever since. **I live in** an old mill house and it's a bit of a zoo. I've got dogs, cats, guineafowl, peacocks, cockatoos and 18 horses. **When I can**, I escape to Andalusia. I've got a



Teammate Charlotte Dujardin

great love affair with Spain because I went to Jerez for one of my first international competitions. The first thing I'm going to do after Rio is to go to Spain. **London 2012 proved** that even though we're a small country, we're successful across the board. I think that's an amazing culture to be part of. **My secret address** in London is the Soho Hotel. I was asked to do a *This Is Your Life* type talk there after the Olympics. I'm not very good with London, so I was worried about finding it in the first place, but it is such a complete and utter oasis of a hotel. It's so cute.

**On Saturday night** you'll find me at a friend's house having dinner. Although I often work seven days a week, Saturday night is always social. **Animal cruelty** makes my blood boil. I'm a patron of dog charity trusts and I've got several rescue dogs myself. **The worst tumble** I have ever taken was first time I was selected to represent GB. I took a young horse out just before and it fell on me while my foot was stuck in the stirrup. Given how long I've been doing this for though, I've been very lucky. **Don't laugh, but I really love** regional accents. I try to perfect them, especially Scottish, Welsh and Irish, but I'm still trying to learn the difference between Derbyshire and Yorkshire. **I couldn't be without** the people I work with everyday. My job is about two things, a human and a horse, so I also couldn't do without my team of amazing grooms. If the horse is happy, I'm happy.

*Olympia Horse Show, 13-19 December.*  
[olympiahorseshow.com](http://olympiahorseshow.com)

## COUNTRY



**ON YER BACK**  
Aspinal of London's Oxford backpack does the trick nicely

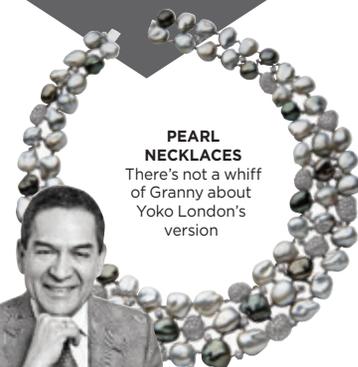


**HOT SHOT**  
Outshine other shooting guests by giving the host a Halstock bespoke shotbox

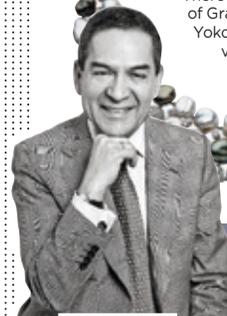
**TIGHT BREECHES**  
Jilly Cooper's latest horsey romp is coming to a stable near you...

## THE DOUBLE LIFER

THE BEST IN COUNTRY & TOWN THIS MONTH



**PEARL NECKLACES**  
There's not a whiff of Granny about Yoko London's version



**SWEET JESUS**  
The man to know at Le Caprice celebrates 35 years with London's fave restaurant



**SOHO STYLE**  
The Uniform Studio - behind the Soho House staff garb - have off-duty looks for us. Hooray!

## TOWN