

## In brief

**Project** Remodel of log cabin  
**Location** Wales  
**Cost** £65,000 in 2001  
**Spent** £65,000  
**Worth** £100,000+



### EXTERIOR

The luxury cabin is set within a wooded copse, with views of the peaks of Snowdonia. These views can also be enjoyed from the hot tub which has an electrically-operated cover for ease of use.

# Cabin fervour

Jane and Justin Humphreys have restored and remodelled a secluded 1970s log cabin on the northern tip of the Snowdonia National Park.

STORY: **DEBBIE JEFFERY** PICTURES: **UNIQUE HOME STAYS**

**W**hen Jane and Justin Humphreys first viewed their modest log cabin 17 years ago it was painted in a lurid orange-coloured stain and reminded them of a glorified

garden shed. "The cabin was built in 1974 as one of three, and it can only be used as a holiday home rather than as a permanent dwelling," says Justin.

"We'd spotted an advert in the property section of the local paper and immediately enquired, but sadly it had already been sold. We left our details with the estate agent and were very pleased to receive a call three months later to say that the buyers had changed their mind and the sale had fallen through, which meant that it was once again on the market. It took us just a couple of days to secure the purchase."

The cabin stands on a hilltop surrounded by forestry on the northern tip of the Snowdonia National Park, and on a clear day it is possible to see more than 20 mountain peaks from the site. Despite being just 10 minutes from a main road the setting is quiet, private and relaxing, and Justin and Jane knew it would make a perfect holiday retreat.

"We ran a hotel for 30 years but are now semi-retired, and as Jane works part time as cabin crew for BA we enjoy travelling and have stayed in cabins and wooden villas around the world," Justin continues. "We could definitely see the potential for this to be a really lovely property."

## Log cabins

Log cabins are still relatively rare in the UK and are more usually built as holiday lodges, although a small number are used as permanent homes. You are more likely to win planning approval if your land is appropriately rural, with one of the main criteria being adequate access to the site to allow for delivery transport and heavy-duty equipment such as a crane.

Timber has a high thermal mass and is a good insulator of heat and sound but, as with any alternative technology, Building Control make take some convincing that all-timber buildings meet Building Regulations, and mortgage lenders may be sceptical.

Some timber-frame suppliers offer log slip cladding to appear as if the building has been built from logs. Others provide small-scale log buildings for out-houses and extensions.

Log buildings can be factory manufactured, pre-assembled and tested, then dismantled and shipped and re-assembled on site. It takes a matter of days to make it watertight, enabling work on the interior to begin almost immediately.

The solid log construction technique offers some inherent design advantages for those who want to create a multi-level living space with impressive double-height ceilings and huge exposed timbers.

By using massive purlins, ceilings can soar and span great distances to create interiors which combine rustic beauty with a modern, spacious layout. Interior logs are usually left exposed, with the wood giving a distinctive look, feel and smell – although it is advisable to dry-line the kitchen area to simplify the installation of wiring and plumbing.



## In detail

Hinterland Cabin is available for holiday rental through Unique Home Stays: [uniquehomestays.com](http://uniquehomestays.com)

### STRUCTURE

**Patio doors** Jewson: [jewson.co.uk](http://jewson.co.uk)

### FIXTURES AND FITTINGS

**Worktop** (kitchen and bathrooms) Ruby

Granite Ltd: [rubygranite.co.uk](http://rubygranite.co.uk)

**Basin** Victoria Plum: [victoriaplum.com](http://victoriaplum.com)

**Infrared sauna** UK Saunas: [uk-saunas.co.uk](http://uk-saunas.co.uk)

**Hot tub** with electric cover Concept Spa: [conceptspa.co.uk](http://conceptspa.co.uk)

**Furnishings** John Lewis: [johnlewis.com](http://johnlewis.com);

Habitat: [habitat.co.uk](http://habitat.co.uk); Etsy: [etsy.com](http://etsy.com)

**Paint and sofa** Designer's Guild: [designersguild.com](http://designersguild.com)



### ORIGINAL

The original 70s cabin has been given a makeover to transform it into an idyllic hideaway.



### EXTERIOR

The single-storey cabin is constructed from 25cm tongue and groove logs and required no insulation. While only a few lower external timbers had to be replaced, the interior has been completely remodelled.

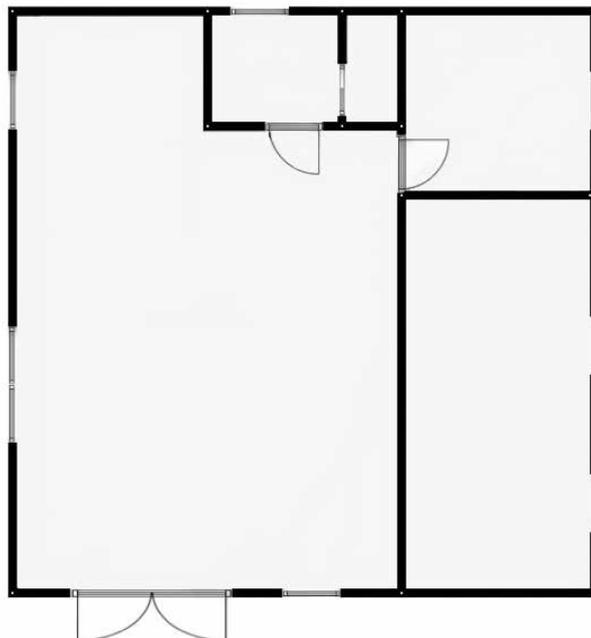
The couple had previously converted a church to live in and had built a small hotel, as well as completing various renovation projects. "We've always tackled a lot of the work ourselves and enjoy getting involved," says Jane. "There was already mains water and electricity to the site, although there's no phone line, so it was immediately habitable."

The cabin is constructed from logs with a tongue and groove, and had three bedrooms, a bathroom, a small sitting room and a kitchen area. "The bedrooms were far too cramped, so we took out the internal wall between two of them which was a quick and straightforward DIY job using a chainsaw," says Justin. "Then we built decking over the old paving slabs outside from which to enjoy the view."

A couple of the lower timbers needed to be replaced as they were rotting, and the Humphreys managed to find a company who make cabins and they were able to supply similar logs. Joiners then jacked up the building and were able to carefully slide out the damaged logs and replace them.

### FLOORPLAN

The 60 sqm cabin is predominantly one open-plan living/dining/kitchen space, with a separate utility room, a shower room, and a bedroom which may be closed off from the main area with a remote-controlled curtain.





“Don’t approach a renovation project with the resale value in mind – go with your heart and the results will be far better.” JANE AND JUSTIN’S TOP TIP



**KITCHEN**

The newly-fitted kitchen is small but perfectly situated in one corner of the open-plan sitting room.

Slowly, the couple improved the single-storey cabin on a DIY basis, including replacing the French doors and painting the interior walls cream which brightened the space immeasurably. The timber ceiling was stained to match the exterior, which the couple finished in a dark oak colour to cover the previous orange shade.

The original bathroom was converted into a utility room, and a fitted kitchen was installed. The old WC became a storage cupboard, and a new

bathroom was created in the smallest bedroom and fitted with sanitaryware and underfloor heating.

“Then last year we decided to give the cabin a really luxurious makeover so that we could rent it out as a holiday home with Unique Home Stays, who have very high standards,” Jane explains. “They came to take a look and allocated a designer to refurbish the whole place. It was quite a big investment, but we knew it would be worthwhile.”

The tiled roof and original wooden windows had already been restored by the couple, who had also fitted timber shutters throughout, but Justin and Jane worked with Unique Home Stays during 2017 to replace virtually everything inside the cabin.

“Wood expands and contracts with the heat, so window frames needed to be fitted into slots rather than screwed in place to allow for the movement,” explains Justin. “When we tiled the bathroom we had to explain this to the tiler, who used battened plywood cut with screw slots to face the external wall and allow it to move without disturbing the tiles.”

The extensive refurbishment work took just over a month to complete, with Unique Home Stays orchestrating the entire process. ‘It was quite stressful because we had holiday bookings already, so there was no time for any delays as we had a fixed deadline,’ says Jane.

Electric radiators can now all be controlled by a single thermostat, with underfloor electric heating and a heated towel rail in the bathroom. As there is no gas to the site the water is also heated in a large cylinder with two elements.

**SITTING AREA**

Elemental-alpine meets traditional Welsh hideaway at Hinterland Cabin. The main living room enjoys mountain views through French doors which open onto a slate terrace.





**BEDROOM**

Part of the wall was removed between the living space and bedroom, which may be closed off with a remote-controlled curtain.

**SETTING**

The cabin is situated in around an acre of land, including part of two fields which the Humphreys also own.

“The logs are around 25cm thick, and the roof is also of heavy tongue and groove construction, so no extra insulation was needed,” says Justin. “It would have been impossible to add any internally without covering up the logs anyway, and we also needed to be careful when positioning wires and pipes so that they’d be hidden in cupboards and behind architraves and skirtings.”

A new white kitchen was installed in one corner of the main living/dining space, and a large opening between this and the bedroom may be closed off for privacy with a remote controlled curtain. “The layout means you can lie in bed and watch the TV in the living room,” Jane explains.

Internal walls have been repainted in a soft shade of grey, and this small change has made a big difference to the feel of the cabin. “In some ways it was strange handing over the interior design to someone else, but we trusted Paul Hervey from Unique Home Stays and

went with his ideas,” explains Justin. “When we finally saw everything come together we realised that we’d made the right decision, as it works beautifully.”

The cabin stands in around an acre of land, including part of two fields which the Humphreys also own, and recent outdoor renovations include replacing the decking with a Welsh slate terrace and using railway sleepers from the local Conwy valley line. “We also invested in a hot tub with an electrically-operated cover, and an infrared sauna in its own cabin,” says Justin.

The log cabin is almost fully booked for holidays, but the Humphreys still enjoy time there whenever they can. “We love to walk along the nearby lake on a summer’s evening or through the carpets of bluebells in spring, and the diverse wildlife and views ensure every season is just as exciting as the last,” says Jane. “For us it’s the perfect hideaway.”

**Final word**

**What was the high point?**

Seeing how beautiful everything now looks and how much improved the cabin is.

**...and the low point?**

Worrying that work wouldn’t be completed in time for the first guest booking.

**The best buy?**

The pale grey paint for the interior walls, which initially worried us as we thought it could look cold. It actually makes everything else stand



out, though, like the roof, floor and wooden shutters. **...and the biggest extravagance?** The remote-controlled hot tub roof, which avoids the need for lugging a great big damp cover on and off.



**BATHROOM**

The luxury shower room features a walk-in shower, stone sink and electric underfloor heating.