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COUNTRY HOMES & INTERIORS

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Exterior

This characterful stone coastal cottage dates back to the 17th century and has sheltered outdoor spaces, an original pretty porch and exhilarating sea views



SEA CHANGE

Chasing a dream to live by the sea, Jane and John Banbury seized a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to turn a smugglers' cottage into a holiday bolthole



Living room

So as not to detract from the impact of the sea view, Jane chose a plain, all-cream palette to dress the window seat. **Muslin**, Designers Guild. **Seat cushions** covered in Perth linen weave, Ian Mankin



When the purchase of a seaside home in Sussex fell through, the Banburys were devastated. It had been their dream to buy a house by the water.

'Rather than putting us off, it refuelled our determination,' says Jane. 'We started looking further afield.'

So, when a one-time smugglers' cottage came up for sale online, they took a five-hour drive from Kent to Lee Beach, a tiny hamlet near Ilfracombe in Devon, famed for its historical links with smugglers.

'We already knew the house from a previous visit - the pretty façade of the cottage had stuck in our minds for years,' Jane says. 'It was a beautiful summer's day when we arrived to view it. Our girls went off to explore the rock pools and I took a photo of them, which turned out to be the best one I've ever taken. That proved to me that we were destined to live here. We were intensely aware of being offered a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and we grabbed it.'

The property had been used in different ways over the centuries. The most recent owners had run a tearoom, while others had a shop and a tiny museum devoted to memorabilia featuring stories of local smugglers. 'I fell in love with the beautiful views, then the historic connections and cosy proportions of the rooms,' says Jane. The bones of the house were fine, although there were >



AT HOME WITH

Owners Jane Banbury, a property consultant, and her husband John, an IT consultant, live here with their two daughters, Ellie, seven, and Bella, four. They bought the house in 2019.

House A 17th-century smugglers' cottage with three bedrooms and a covered terrace extension.

Living room

The mellow tones of a leather chair complement the curved brick canopy of the fireplace and add warmth to the scheme. Leather tub chair, Reginald Ballum. Lamp, Frezoli Lighting. Sofa, Sofa.com



“I FELL IN LOVE WITH THE BEAUTIFUL VIEWS, THE HISTORIC CONNECTIONS AND THE INTIMATE COSY ROOMS”



Terrace
High-backed chairs act as windbreakers in the covered terrace dining area, while festoon lights add to the atmosphere. Wicker chairs and festoon lights, Garden Trading



Cement worktop
 a modern feel. H
 Anvil Ironm
 Find similar cab
 Harvey Jones
 pendant

two modern bathrooms and laminate floors, which didn't sit happily with its historic origins. Outside, a long, covered loggia divided into three provided sheltered alfresco living space.

The first challenge was how to reinstate the house's lost personality. The laminate floors were replaced with tumbled stone in the kitchen while upstairs, original floorboards were uncovered in the bedrooms. Old exposed stonework was cleaned up; modern radiators were replaced with old-fashioned cast iron ones; and underfloor heating was installed in the kitchen and the bathrooms.

'The living room with its heavy beams was dingy,' Jane recalls. 'Painting the beams and laying a neutral carpet solved the problem.' The room is a sun trap and is blessed with a stunning view from the bay window.

The second challenge was maximising space. There was no loft, but the couple managed to create a guest bedroom at the top of the house, fitting in a chest, small antique cupboard and large comfortable bed. 'The bed had to be delivered in pieces and we had to take out the window and erect scaffolding to access the space. Coping with narrow stairs made a lot of our furniture a nightmare to put in place,' says Jane.

Keen to have an extra luxurious bathroom, a tiny fourth bedroom was sacrificed. Jane says this room is often >



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Dining room

A built-in bench provides extra seating for the children, while a gallery wall of vintage paintings adds character. **Walls** painted in Wimborne White; **chairs**, a similar paint colour is Worsted, both Farrow & Ball



Main bed
Reclaimed tin ro
create a char
statement above th
Lamps, Nkuk
Weaver Gree
tables, Vinterior,
similar bed

greeted by visitors with welcome surprise as they equate old cottages with small poky bathrooms. Getting the vintage cast iron bath up the stairs was another challenge.

Throughout the project Jane held on to her overall vision to create an interior with a relaxed vintage style using many reclaimed rustic pieces. 'While I wanted some reference to living by the sea, I kept it subtle, so no coils of rope or model boats!' Her palette is pale and creamy. 'Like the brandy once smuggled by the first owner of the cottage,' she smiles. The textures are rustic, including natural linen and wicker. In contrast the bathroom walls are ultra smooth, created by an expert plasterer who came on board to help. He also created the micro cement worktops in the kitchen, which look similar to polished plaster.

Modern comforts are present but played down, such as the wall-mounted television hidden behind a set of vintage shutters that blend with the exposed stonework. 'We always aimed for comfort and a cosy, homely atmosphere and I think we have achieved it,' says Jane. 'Living here is wonderful in summer when the doors and windows are thrown open. We even get the occasional hiker passing by who stops to ask if we still provide Devon cream teas. It all adds to the fun of living here.'

The Brandy Thief is available to rent through Unique Home Stays uniquehomestays.com >



Bathroom

Jane has created a pared-back scheme with a prized vintage cast-iron bath as the focal point. Wooden stool, Etsy. Industville has a similar wall light. Jug, Dunelm



“WHILE I WANTED SOME REFERENCE TO LIVING BY THE SEA, I KEPT IT SUBTLE, SO NO COILS OF ROPE OR MODEL BOATS”



Twin bedroom

A nod to coastal style, the reclaimed, cladded headboard wall connects the twin beds in Ellie and Bella's room. Headboard, bespoke from Lawson's Yard. Faux fur throws, Next Home

Lee Bay is a p
sheltered cove on
North Devon coast,
west of Ilfracor

ON OUR DOORSTEP

Visit ... 'The Valley of the Rocks, near Lynmouth. The Victorian funicular railway powered by water is a slow stomach-churning ride up and down the cliff face and a fun day for the children who love to drink hot chocolate in the café (cliffrailwaylynton.co.uk).'

Shop at ... 'Browns Antiques & Reclamation (brownsantiquesandreclamation.co.uk) in South Molton. It is a treasure trove of unexpected and unusual finds, from large pieces of vintage furniture to decorative kitchenware.'

Go for a meal at ... 'The Grampus Inn (thegrampus-inn.co.uk) is a local pub and has live music and a lovely log fire. They serve the best home cooking ever.'