

THE CHARACTERFUL COTTAGE ON THE BEACH

Just a pebble's throw from the sea,
this former fisherman's cottage is filled
with carefully chosen vintage treasures
that pay homage to its long history
and beautiful location

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HOME PROFILE

WHO OWNS IT

Paula Craigen and her husband Iain

THE PROPERTY

A 200-year-old fisherman's cottage with a balcony overlooking the beach at St Ives, Cornwall

SEA VIEWS

Paula and Iain's daughter Hannah relaxes in front of a window looking out on to Porthmeor Beach with her daughter Primrose. All the original sash windows were retained and restored with new pulleys, weights and ropes. [Chair](#), [Sofa.com](#) →



'THIS IS A HOUSE THAT HAS BEEN LOVED FOR A VERY LONG TIME,'

says Paula Craigen. 'I've always been drawn to period properties and this one has a particularly beautiful old soul.' She and her husband Iain had been looking for somewhere to buy in Cornwall, hoping for at least a sea view, but this house overlooking Porthmeor Beach in St Ives, where property rarely comes onto the market, exceeded their wildest expectations. 'Its balcony is just metres from the waves,' says Paula. They managed to complete the purchase before the Covid lockdown, but then couldn't visit for many months. The delay, however, gave them the time they needed to dream up the perfect interior.

'The house had been in the same family for 60 years,' says Paula, 'so we felt a huge responsibility to its previous owners. It still had a lot of original features and any changes

we made needed to preserve its integrity and respect its history.'

The 200-year-old property, once three separate houses, is part of a small courtyard of fisherman's cottages, one of which was home to fisherman and painter Alfred Wallis. 'He would almost certainly have set foot in here,' says Paula. 'In fact, we decided to call it Alba House after one of his paintings, *Wreck of the Alba*, of a ship caught in high seas off Porthmeor Beach.'

To help them get started on the project, Paula and Iain called in Jess Clark, interiors expert at lettings company Unique Homestays, as they planned to rent out the house before moving in permanently. Jess was similarly smitten. 'Our aim all along was to keep things as authentic as possible,' she explains. 'We didn't need to lay new flooring or replace the doors – those old bones had to remain the primary focus, so that nothing we added detracted from them. There are no statement pieces here. Everything blends beautifully to create a welcoming and lived-in atmosphere.'

Between them they drew up a wishlist of vintage items. 'Once lockdown was lifted, Iain and I visited reclamation yards and antiques fairs, and went with Jess to Shiver Me Timbers, a salvage specialist in Penzance,' remembers Paula. 'We constantly traded ideas because we were searching for some pretty specific things. It took many weeks, but everything we found brought us one step closer. It's always easier to buy off-the-shelf, but we wanted this house to be full of unique things.'

Iain, a builder by trade, then moved into the house for six months to bring their ideas to →

LIVING SPACE

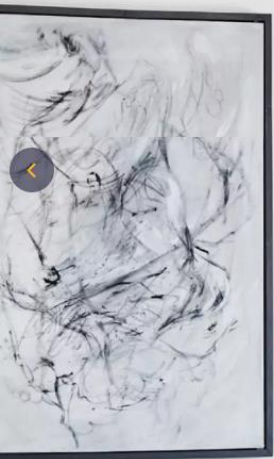
A woodburning stove is the focus of the cosy sitting area within the main living space, which features a window seat overlooking the water.

Woodburning stove, Charmwood. Sofas, [Sofa.com](https://www.sofa.com). Rug, La Redoute



DINING AREA

Paula and her granddaughter Primrose play cards in the dining room, where the carpets were pulled back to reveal original floorboards painted in soft turquoise. Strings of floats and a barnacle-clad octopus pot underline the property's relationship to the sea. The large artwork, a charcoal drawing called *Scribbles*, is by the artist Clare Cammack



KITCHEN

Iain constructed most of the kitchen cupboards from modern carcasses and benches from an old science lab, found in Shiver Me Timbers in Penzance. An industrial tool bench, sourced at another reclamation yard, was repurposed as a kitchen island



life. He started by lifting the old carpets to reveal a patchwork of floorboards, adding a layer of matt varnish to preserve their patina. 'It actually took a lot of work to give the impression we hadn't touched the floors,' laughs Paula. 'But it was worth it. They're rather like a time capsule because they chart everything that has happened to the house over the years – including where every rug was laid.'

Next, Iain transformed reclaimed benches from an old school science lab into kitchen cupboards and worktops, and crafted integrated doors for the fridge-freezer and washing machine from antique French louvred shutters. 'He has a background in carpentry and has always been great at making something out of nothing,' explains Paula.

To create the simplest of backdrops, local decorator Mark Campbell painted all the walls in standard white emulsion – the perfect gallery-like setting for vintage prints and traditional seascapes, plus contemporary pieces by Hertfordshire-based abstract artist Clare Cammack.

As they had hoped, conjuring up the sense of a bygone era invites visitors to enjoy life at a slower pace. 'Three of the four bedrooms look out over the beach, which means you wake to the sound of the sea and the gulls,' says Paula. 'All the window seats are designed for reading or for wave-watching, and the balcony is the best place for a drink at sunset.'

'Though the house is glorious in summer, the couple love it equally off season, when the beaches are empty and the weather is wild. 'On a stormy day you really understand how much the house has withstood over the years,' says Paula. 'And there's something extremely comforting about that.'

For more details about staying at Alba Beach House, visit uniquelhomestays.com

DISPLAY AREA

Right Open shelving holds a mix of everyday items and vintage finds. The Meals Served All Day print is by local artist Rex O'Dell

STAIRCASE

Far right An echo of its past life as three separate cottages, the house has an extra staircase that leads from the snug up to the green bedroom



PINK BEDROOM

Though colour is used sparingly in this house, shades of pink and terracotta appear in this bedroom.

Bedlinen, Piglet in Bed.

Chandelier, Cream Cornwall.

Rug, La Redoute →

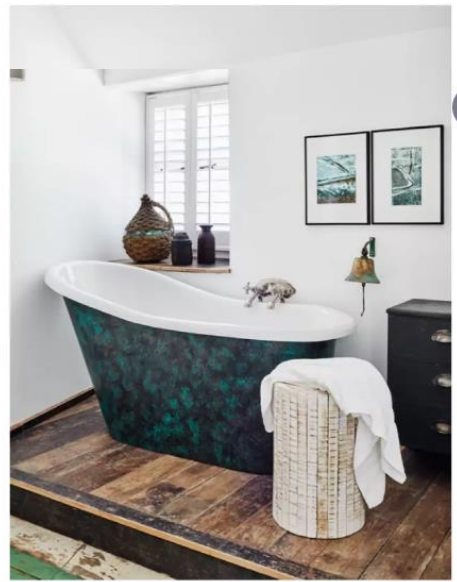
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GREEN BEDROOM

Left Echoing the original paint on the dining room floorboards, this room has shades of turquoise and green from vintage books, an antique seascape and the peeling paint on the old shutters that have been repurposed as a headboard

Below Decorator Mark Campbell created a special verdigris paint effect on the freestanding bath in this bedroom



BATHROOM

Right Off-cuts of timber left over from work in the kitchen were used to make a vanity unit that holds a washbowl; the taps are refurbished too. The artwork on the walls is by Clare Cammack.

Basin, Tikamoon

BEACHFRONT

Far right The pink-painted house overlooks Porthmeor Beach, which has inspired generations of artists and is a favourite with holidaymakers **HB**

