

'This little place means a lot to us'

Injecting fresh life into a crumbling Cornish retreat was made all the more enjoyable for Jackie and Tim Kitchen, thanks to its great sentimental value

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fact file

WHO LIVES HERE?

Jackie Kitchen, her husband Tim, and their daughters Rebecca, aged 20, and Rachel, aged 16.

WHAT DO JACKIE AND TIM DO FOR A LIVING?

She runs a holiday company called Niche Retreats, and he is a builder.

WHEN DID THEY BUY THE PROPERTY?

They bought the cottage in the year 2000, to use as a weekend retreat.

HOW MUCH DID IT COST?

£100,000, plus £18,000 for renovations.

WHAT IS ITS CURRENT VALUE?

The property is now worth in the region of £350,000.



Jackie Kitchen enjoys life with her family in their converted-barn home, from which she runs a holiday business – but being able to escape from it all at weekends is still an appealing idea. So, when a very special property became available just an hour's drive away on the Cornish coast, she was quick to snap it up.

How did you discover the cottage?

Years ago it belonged to Tim's family, who have lived in Cornwall for generations. In fact, his mother spent the first year of her marriage here – then later it passed out

of the family's hands. Because I knew the story, I used to glance admiringly at the cottage whenever I visited the village. It has been a real pleasure for us to be able to get it back and start using it as our special seaside retreat.

What state was the property in?

It had stood empty for some time and was quite run down. We installed central heating, a new kitchen and beech-laminate flooring, and redecorated throughout.

Did you face any major difficulties?

Not really, although we did have some salt penetration, which isn't uncommon in



Above left Jackie has enjoyed reclaiming the cottage, which used to belong to Tim's family. Now they can enjoy it with their own daughters.

Above The focal point of the atmospheric oak-beamed living-cum-dining room, where the walls are painted in Laura Ashley's Faded Gold, is the spiral staircase, constructed from wrought iron and timber.

Left The furniture came from local shops, including Elegant Homes in Penryn and Casa Fina in Truro.



Cane chairs, bought locally, surround a sturdy wooden dining table that was made by Tim. The curtain material was bought from Truro Fabrics



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coastal properties. That's why we put timber cladding on the back walls. The garden was a total mess and it took a lot of hard labour to transform it into an oasis.

Did you work to a strict budget?

Yes, I allocated £18,000 and kept to it – I'm fortunate enough to have a husband who has his own building company!

Have you made many changes?

Above all, I wanted to capitalise on the cottage's rustic charm and character. The spiral staircase in the main room isn't original to the house, of course – it was installed by the previous owner and provides a great focal point. My aim was to make the cottage feel warmer and more comfortable; to give us a place to escape to, whatever the season. We lead busy working lives, so it's always lovely when there's a chance to get away to relax by the

sea. This place has amazing restorative powers – especially when you wake up to the sound of seagulls and crashing waves.

Which do you prefer, traditional or modern decor?

I don't really have an ideal look – I believe in being guided by the architecture of a property. I recently finished an interior design course and for years have been addicted to reading glossy homes magazines. I'm convinced an old cottage like this should be treated sympathetically and given a traditional feel.

How else has the course helped you?

It was an intensive, three-day course in London that gave me a sound introduction to interior design. Among other things we covered lighting, which is an important consideration in a property like this, which has such low ceilings. Pendant lights, for



GREAT IDEAS

[1] Container gardening

Tim and Jackie didn't want to have to wait for years for their newly cleared garden to re-establish itself, so they've introduced a selection of potted plants, shrubs and trees, supplied by Chris Green Garden Design. Several plants, including tree ferns and astelias, are ideal for shady corners.

[2] Tiled wall

Jackie liked her choice of yellow and cream tiles for the splashback so much, she has extended them all the way up to the ceiling. The tiles work well next to the square panes of glass in the window and alongside the check blind, creating a combined effect that is bright, sunny and coordinated.

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Jackie on... great escapes
 'I love to relax on the patio and enjoy the beautiful sea views. We sometimes let the cottage to holidaymakers as a way to recoup some of the costs'

Jackie on... shopping

'I'm keen to support local businesses – they offer lots of nice furnishings and some great individual pieces'



instance, don't work too well. It's better to have downlighters and plenty of task lighting for reading or working. The course built my confidence and I hope to enrol on another one when time allows.


What inspired your colour schemes?

When you have a home in coastal Cornwall, the beautiful light is always a big factor. It filters through the windows and changes the rooms' atmospheres as the day goes by. I particularly like the way the faded-gold paintwork becomes so much richer around sunset. I've opted for a soft palette of warm ochres and terracottas, and used the sea as inspiration in one of the bedrooms – the blues and lavenders in there are very calming.

Is there still more you want to do?

Eventually, when funds allow, I'd like to replace the laminated flooring with real wood to provide the perfect finish.

What is your cottage's best feature?

I think it has to be its timeless character, and I hope what we've done has enhanced it by just the right amount. 

Above Jackie, who chose the pale gold and cream colour combination to highlight the main bedroom's country-cottage charms, found the old brass bed at Grate Expectations. The cane-worked furniture came from a shop called Fine Pine.

Below A large mirror on one wall enhances the sense of space in the small bathroom. Handsome shutters at the window coordinate perfectly with the wooden floor.



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