

'We are as CLOSE TO THE SEA as the law allows'

Charles Williams has transformed his dilapidated old boathouse into a beautiful and comfortable home

Words and Styling Anne Armstrong Photography David Parmiter



The open-plan living space is arranged beneath an amazing ceiling of criss-crossed beams and boasts a beautiful bamboo floor. The curtains – in Awning Stripe fabric from Laura Ashley – inspired the colour scheme, while the top section of the rounded window is designed to resemble a yacht sail. The chenille-covered sofa was bought locally



Part of a secluded estate in Cornwall, long renowned for the beauty of its gardens, Charles Williams' property is only a stone's throw away from the sea. 'Although it served for some time as a boathouse, the building was originally built as an ordinary home,' explains Charles, 'so I was convinced it could be given a new lease of life, and used once again as a comfy living space. It's now a great place to escape to at weekends.'

The boathouse had been left unused and untouched since the 1920s. By the time Charles discovered it, it had degenerated into little more than a shell, with a leaky

roof, bare brick walls, and a pair of large doors. So the architects were called in to advise on how best to rejuvenate the place, re-establish the original upper floor and create a new, 'upside-down' interior.

The renovation work started in 2004 and took ten months to complete. From the outside, the building retains the utilitarian air that befits a work-a-day boathouse, 'but I wanted something radically different inside,' says Charles. The new interior is modern and relaxed, because Charles wanted to capitalise on the away-from-it-all waterside location. 'Legend has it that Daphne du Maurier had this particular cove in mind when she

fact file

WHAT SORT OF HOUSE IS IT?

The property is a converted boathouse with two bedrooms, en-suite shower room, bathroom and an impressive, open-plan living/kitchen/dining space.

WHO IS THE OWNER?

It belongs to Charles Williams, who uses it as a weekend retreat. The property is also rented out

to self-catering holidaymakers (call 01209 861745 for a brochure).

WHERE IS IT?

It is part of a private estate, situated in a secluded cove in Cornwall.

ANY SPECIAL FEATURES?

The boathouse has an intriguing upside-down interior layout, with a vaulted beamed ceiling and magnificent views of the sea.





Right The armchairs, £120 each from Ikea, have been re-cushioned with extra comfy fillings; the screen was bought locally and hides the TV.

Far right The kitchen's solid-pine cabinets and beech worktops were built by local specialist Tristan Hay.

wrote her famous novel, *Rebecca*, he says. The main focus is the combined living, dining and kitchen space on the upper floor. This is a wide, open area, regularly bathed in sunlight, which filters through distinctively-shaped windows. 'There is just one view through these windows, and that's of the sea,' enthuses Charles. 'The architects came up with a really clever redesign.'

Conversion costs were in the region of £100,000 and the interior-design budget was strict. 'I allocated £18,000 for inside and, as far as possible, I wanted to involve local suppliers,' says Charles, who was also

determined to resist the temptation to go overboard with 'seaside-themed' decorations: 'I think the house's internal architecture does much of the talking.'

The decorative tone is set by the lofty ceiling, dramatically criss-crossed by white-washed timber beams that create a breezy feeling of light and space. Uniformity is achieved by painting the walls throughout in Ochre by Dulux, making the interior appear far larger than the exterior suggests. Underfoot there's a wide expanse of bamboo flooring, and the uncluttered arrangement of furnishings is finished in a cream, sand and misty-blue



Charles on... **impact**
 'I wanted something radically different inside, and the internal architecture does a lot of the talking'



Far left A classically designed bed from MFI is crisply dressed in a combination of white sheets and pillow cases, topped with powder-blue accessories.

Left John Lewis tab-top curtains hang from a curtain pole that was originally an oar. Jonelle fabric has been used to upholster the bedhead.

Below Decor in the bathroom takes its cue from the design of a traditional beach hut. Striped fabric from John Lewis has been fashioned into a sail-inspired window treatment.

Charles on... decoration

'I resisted going overboard on a seaside theme, but nautical touches work in the right places'



colour combination. The Ikea armchairs have been customised to provide extra comfort and durability. One jolly touch that, admittedly, does pay homage to the watery location, is a folding screen, printed with a contemporary beach scene and bought specifically to hide the television. A little partition, meanwhile, separates the living and dining areas from the streamlined kitchen, which has been well-equipped with solid wood cabinets.

The lower floor consists of two good-sized bedrooms and a bathroom. These are rooms with a naturally subdued atmosphere, which inevitably posed a bit of a challenge when Charles was deciding how to decorate them. Once again, it's the ceiling beams that create character, while

the uplighters inject a warm glow in the evenings. The blue-and-white colour scheme is simple yet eye-catching, and if there is one room where a jaunty nautical influence is more than justified, it's in the enticing bathroom, which has been styled with an Edwardian beach hut in mind.

'The inside of the house has changed beyond all recognition,' says Charles. 'It is hard to believe that the building was in such a bad state until only recently. The conversion is a complete success.' Charles now happily shares the boathouse with self-catering holidaymakers, who can enjoy the relaxing interior and peaceful location to their hearts' content. RH

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