

HOMES



# see the light

FROM DILAPIDATED FARMHOUSE TO  
LUXURIOUS COUNTRY HOUSE B&B →

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## HOMES

Most of us can only dream of having a house where everything not only looks fantastic but also runs like clockwork. But for one couple, it's a way of life. Gill Sawyer and Gary Smith's recently renovated farmhouse in the hamlet of Come To Good, near Truro, is a shining example of the virtues of top-end craftsmanship, sound design practice and unstinting attention to detail.

The couple moved to Cornwall from London three years ago, after making a "life reassessment" and swapping the urban fast-lane for something altogether more wholesome. They had been coming down to the West Country for 20 years to visit Gill's sister, who lives in Truro, and had loved every trip. Added to that, Gary, a self-taught cook, wanted a new career that would allow him to spend more time in the kitchen. While he didn't want the full-on commitment of running a restaurant or a pub, opening a bed and breakfast seemed to tick all the boxes.

When the estate agent first sent them details of Tregye, an old property that dates back to the 1700s, it looked perfect. "Within 10 seconds of viewing it, we knew it was right," says Gill. "There were plenty of quirky features that added bags of character and the location was ideal. It's around 40 minutes' drive to just about anywhere in Cornwall, from Padstow to Penzance, St Ives to Eden."

However, the couple felt that the asking price was too high as the house required substantial renovation. With an impressive display of determination, they held their nerve and

waited as, over the next six months, the price dropped bit by bit until it came within their reach. And then they bought it.

"The property really lent itself to conversion into a bed and breakfast," says Gary, "and we could easily see how to create an en suite bathroom in each of the guest bedrooms." But more pressing changes included replacing the roof, undertaking a complete rewire and installing a new heating and hot water system. They lived through this phase with

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equanimity, their sights set firmly on the end result. Gary acted as both project manager and labourer and admits that it was, at times, "tough going".

One stroke of genius was to employ the services of a lighting designer early on in the project. Claire Pendarves, of Illumina in Truro, devised a plan that would solve some tricky dilemmas, such as how to light a high-beamed ceiling, and so ensure that the finished rooms would look slick and professional.

"Lighting is a crucial element of home design that people

**PREVIOUS SPREAD:** LUXURIOUS EN SUITE BATHROOM, WITH FREESTANDING BATH AND TELEVISION, IN THE CREAMERY, TREGYE FARMHOUSE'S SELF-CONTAINED HOLIDAY ACCOMMODATION **INSET:** THE MOST STRIKING ROOM IN THE MAIN HOUSE IS THE KITCHEN, FEATURING TRENDY BAR STOOLS AND AN INDUSTRIAL HOB



often overlook," says Gill. "Getting an expert to help us did add to the total cost of the renovation, but the investment has more than paid off. We couldn't have achieved any of this without Claire."

Gill and Gary also sought Claire's advice about other aspects of the interior, including choosing colours, introducing pattern and texture, and using natural light to best effect. In the warm light of the south-facing bedroom, for example, Claire recommended a blue and beige scheme, while in the north-facing guest room she suggested adding touches of a beautifully warming deep red. Claire also introduced them to some clever paint colours by The Paint and Paper Library that were then used on both woodwork and walls for their amazing light-reflecting properties.

Perhaps the most striking room in the house is the kitchen, which Gary delighted in planning along with local bespoke kitchen expert Richard Winfrey. The requirements were manifold: as well as being high-spec enough to cook breakfasts and organise dinner parties for guests, they needed somewhere that could accommodate up to 20 people for cookery demos.

Richard Winfrey came up with a design that used several materials – burr oak, oak veneer and a high-gloss finish – on a range of cupboards and freestanding furniture, with splash-backs in glass and worktops in a quartz composite. Central to the plan is an island unit, surrounded by trendy bar stools, which houses an industrial hob so that cooking can happen in full view of everyone in the room.

Next, they added various state-of-the-art gadgets: a boiling-water tap so there is no need for a kettle to clutter the space; pop-down plugs, avoiding unsightly sockets; a recycling unit with handy compartments for all kitchen waste; and a dual-temperature wine storage cabinet that keeps both red and white wines in peak condition.

"Like me, Richard likes everything to be done properly, with real attention to detail," says Gary. "Gradually the job expanded to include replacing the plastic windows with wooden ones to match the rest of the house and then, under Richard's guidance, adding precisely the right window fixings. I think that's why we are so delighted with this room. It has exceeded all our expectations."

Gill and Gary's final job was to convert an outbuilding, originally a dairy, into further self-contained holiday accommodation. Now known as The Creamery, it is the jewel in Tregye's crown, with its double-height bedroom open to the rafters, its own kitchen, and a huge and luxurious en suite complete with freestanding bath and bathroom television.

The business of running Tregye is now an all-consuming passion for Gill and Gary, one that involves plenty of hard graft as well as glorious moments of culinary magic. "There are lots of early mornings and there's a constant schedule of cleaning," says Gill. "And you really have to like people and get on easily with them to do this job. But it's never a strain as the people we have had to stay have been so incredibly nice. When your guests are like that, it's absolutely no effort at all." 

**BELOW, LEFT:** THE CREAMERY, WITH ITS DOUBLE-HEIGHT BEDROOM OPEN TO THE RAFTERS **RIGHT:** THE MOST STRIKING ROOM IN THE HOUSE IS THE KITCHEN, PLANNED WITH LOCAL BESPOKE KITCHEN EXPERT RICHARD WINFREY TO INCLUDE TRENDY BAR STOOLS AND AN INDUSTRIAL HOB



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