



"This is the last outbuilding on the farm that we decided to convert"

TWO into ONE

Susie and Rory Askew took a couple of derelict farm buildings and created this relaxing retreat in the heart of the Devon countryside

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1 & 2 KITCHEN/DINING ROOM

The Gothic-style windows were commissioned from GS Haydon (01769 572134). Homebase (0845 077 8888) supplies similar cabinetry, while the flooring is from M C Slates (01363 82598). Susie bought her Sophie Conran china, table runner, napkins and cutlery from John Lewis (08456 049049)



MEET THE OWNERS

Susie Askew, a property developer, and her husband Rory, who is a farmer, plus black Labrador Flora and Prudence the cat
PREVIOUS HOME 'We moved here from a farmhouse in West Sussex,' says Susie.
CURRENT PROPERTY Converted lambing and tractor shed in Devon, built around 1890. The cottage is available to rent through Unique Home Stays (01637 881942).
ROOMS Sitting room, kitchen/dining room, two bedrooms, bathroom
PURCHASED 1998

The lanes of North Devon wind through some of England's most unspoilt countryside – so it's no wonder Susie and Rory Askew decided to up sticks and leave their home 200 miles away in West Sussex. 'It's such a beautiful part of the world that when the chance came, we felt we had to take it,' says Susie. 'We bought a number of run-down farm properties knowing a lot of work would be involved in converting and extending them. But we loved the prospect of a new challenge, and the buildings also came with enough land to make sheep farming viable, which appealed to Rory.'

After drawing up a design and obtaining planning permission to join two sheds – one of which was used for lambing and the other for ▶

storing tractors – the couple made them structurally sound before demolishing a section of the wall that had divided the two buildings. Then, once the flooring had been relaid, the tractor shed became the new kitchen-cum-dining room. ‘We could have diminished the kitchen space to include a hall, but we wanted both rooms to be as large as possible,’ says Susie. The lambing shed was converted into a sitting room downstairs with the original hay loft above turned into two bedrooms and a bathroom.

‘We also decided to create two new entrances – one leading straight into the kitchen and the other to the sitting room,’ Susie explains. ‘This means that when you come in after a walk in the woods, you don’t have to traipse through the reception area with your muddy wellies. Even better, in the summertime you can open the sitting-room door, and admire the countryside and enjoy the sound of birdsong and the lovely brook nearby.’ The plans included some unusual



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1 & 2 SITTING ROOM The walls are painted in Farrow & Ball’s (01202 876141) New White and feature a series of period botanical prints found at Arc Prints (020 7720 1628). Here, as throughout the cottage, the sisal carpet was supplied by Rogers Carpets (01398 323453). Susie dressed her sofas and tub chairs from Ikea (0845 358 3364) with some Andrew Martin (020 7225 5100) cushions



2

DESIGN ADVICE *‘Plan thoroughly, down to the last detail – here, we began with where to put the drive and ended with the exact position of the plug sockets’*

features. ‘I’ve always loved Gothic-style buildings,’ Susie explains, ‘so we decided to have arched windows specially made in the kitchen-cum-dining room. They were quite expensive, but they have given this space its unique character.’

Susie also had a sharp eye for detail when it came to furnishing the house. ‘Even before the place was finished, I drew up a mental picture of how the interiors should be,’ she says. ‘I wanted something comfortable and in a no-fuss country style.’

Her colour schemes in taupe and cream are designed to generate visual calm, while accents in green reflect the unspoilt landscape just outside the door. ‘I’ve framed some Victorian botanical prints for the sitting room,’ Susie says, ‘and in the kitchen, the accessories are in a fresh lettuce-green shade.’

‘What we love most about living here is the seclusion,’ says Rory. ‘Not only is the countryside idyllic, but there’s an amazing array of wildlife to enjoy – from badgers, rabbits and deer to the birds in the sky. Not to mention my flock of sheep.’ **BH**



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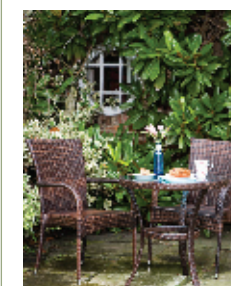
3 MASTER BEDROOM Susie keeps to her crisp scheme with smart bedlinen bought from The White Company (0870 900 9555), while Ikea cushions add a splash of colour. The dressing table, chair and side table were found at a local antiques shop; try Snapdragon (01769 572374) for similar, and Source for the Goose (01769 579483) for the bedside lamp
4 BATHROOM The couple’s roll-top bath, bought from City Plumbing (01271 343020), was painted in a rich, chocolate shade; try Dulux’s (0870 444 1111) Velvet Truffle 4 for an equally tempting finish



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INSPIRED BUYS

Susie and Rory’s choice of rattan chairs helps to enhance the relaxed feel of their kitchen-cum-dining room. These are our top three finds



▲ Dominica rattan bistro set, including two chairs and a table, £129.99, Focus (0800 436436, focus.co.uk)



▲ Paper loom weave dining chair, £299 a pair, Marks & Spencer (0845 302 1234, mands.com)



▲ Chiltern Maddelena pine dining chair with a natural weave finish, £225 a pair, Next (0844 844 8911, next.co.uk)