

# Pear tree barn

When the Hancocks discovered Pear Tree Barn, they fell in love and bought it, but the time limit on the existing planning permission meant they almost lost the chance to create something rather special

WORDS & PICTURES ALEXANDRA PRATT

readers' homes | **conversion**

Materials  
Stone & block  
Project cost  
£141,000  
Location  
Newquay

“Location, privacy, views and a rural aspect”

Before Simon and Sue Hancock even stepped foot inside an ancient barn on the Cornish coast, the couple were already intent on purchasing it. “The 17th century barn and adjacent piggery had so much potential,” says Simon. The property, down a track not far from the magnificent beaches at Newquay, became well known to the couple who own a country pub nearby. “We had walked past it many times. It faces south; it’s sheltered and in an area with its own microclimate. It’s quite extraordinary.”

Scandalised at the asking price of £650,000 when the barns (plus a period house and seven acres), first came to market, the Hancocks bided their time. Eventually, after months of no interest, the vendor reduced the price substantially. At this point the couple snapped up the property.

“The buildings were dilapidated, disused and in real danger of falling into complete disrepair,” says Simon. “Thankfully, the purchase came with detailed planning permission – and listed building consent – to convert the properties into a two bedroom cottage (with the buildings linked by a new glazed section) and a small extension added to the end of the single storey piggery.”

After moving into the house next door, Simon and Sue began work on the barn, clearing it out, putting in drainage, a new septic tank and submitting an application for building regulations approval. “The deadline for starting the project under the terms of the existing planning permission was looming. But as far as I was concerned, I’d started the project,” says Simon. “Then, an architect friend came to look over all our documents and pointed out that the ‘start’ was subject to the conditions included on the permission – the design of the vertical boarding under the windows, the style of ridge tiles and the appearance of trickle vents – all of which were still outstanding as we hadn’t received Building Regs approval.”



The white wood panelling, slate floor and slender kitchen cabinets give the room a pretty country style

### Approve and amend

"Our friend told us to really push for a decision, fearing that we wouldn't get the same permission again," says Simon. "So I immediately wrote to the planning department. But time passed and no response came back."

With just one day left until the permission expired, Simon called the local authority's head of planning, and agreed on the conditions. "I said you can have whatever you want, I don't care." Again however, his friend pointed out that legally the matter was not fully resolved until it was in writing, and suggested that Simon go to the planning department at 9am and not leave until he had it. So, after refusing an invitation to re-submit the amended plans (and thereby losing the permission) Simon annotated the drawings and finally walked away holding consent with just hours to spare.

Now able to turn their full attention to the barns, Simon and Sue thought about how they wanted to tackle the project. "We decided to retain the original features whilst using modern techniques to make it fit for purpose for the 21st century," says Simon. "We wanted it to be cosy, comfy and full of character."

The couple continued with the rest of the preliminary work and designing the home's internal layout. ☉



However when the recession hit in 2008, work on the conversion stopped until 2010 due to financial constraints. When the couple were ready to start works again, they struggled to get reasonable quotes from any of the building firms they contacted. After another few months, Simon came across Marcus Greenaway at Luxuria Developments. "I liked the way Marcus worked," says Simon. "I thought yes, this guy will get us there. So I took him on as the main contractor, the company arranged everything for us – the floors, insulation, damp proofing, plus he built the plant room extension and the terraces."

Both the extensions were built in cavity blockwork with stone facing, which Simon managed to source from both his own land and that of neighbouring farmers. The internal walls of the original, solid stone buildings were tanked, then insulated using Kingspan panels, which were attached with adhesives so as not to pierce the tanking. New concrete floors were laid with extra insulation.

While the interior focus was on using the latest technology to keep the damp out, the exterior of the building was allowed to 'breathe' by using traditional lime for the pointing supplied from the Cornish Lime Company.

Simon and Sue were keen to make the barn conversion as low-impact and energy efficient as possible, using low wattage LED lights and opting for a big-ticket piece of green technology; a ground source heat pump. "We were starting from scratch, we have no access to mains gas, so our choice was renewables or oil," says Simon. "In a period conversion where space is at a premium, radiators take up valuable room, so an underfloor heating system linked up to the pump seemed like the logical choice – it was the most efficient way to emit heat, too. But I underestimated the cost as we purchased at a time when government grants for eco technology installation were halved. Unfortunately, I may never get payback back on the system."

While his new builder hired his own sub contractors, Simon remained responsible for overseeing the project. Inevitably, in such a rural location, it was the utilities that provided us with the biggest challenge. "It seemed to take forever to get the electricity connected. And it was a very costly exercise, too – more than £3,000," says Simon. "I had to pay 60% of the cost of a new transformer, because the electricity company decided that the burden of the new house may result in there not being enough power to supply the rest of the hamlet. Annoyingly, we've been living here quite a while now and the transformer hasn't been changed yet."

Water was another problem, forcing Simon to dig a 700m trench through the surrounding fields. "It took a long time and then I had to get the pipe chlorinated," he says. "The requisite certificate was gained through a company based in Plymouth."

#### Interior update

Internally, the design is a chic country casual home, with a light, almost 'Mediterranean' feel through the use of glazing and vaulted ceilings. "The focus inside is on natural and high quality materials that are in-keeping with the original fabric of the agricultural building. I'm very proud of the reclaimed wood lintels over internal doors, and of the Douglas fir beams used in the ceilings."



Engineered oak flooring sits on top of the underfloor heating system. The Douglas fir beams add character and were from a sustainable source



The recycled and traditional products are balanced with modern materials for efficiency. For example, 6mm oak engineered flooring was used instead of solid planks to cope with the underfloor heating better. To achieve a more natural look, Simon ordered the flooring in differing widths to keep a more 'rustic' feel, which is also reflected in the rough plaster finish and curved window reveals. "This was a difficult finish for a plasterer to achieve, but we found a local artisanship who did it," says Simon.

To add a unique element, the couple opted to design themselves via an online design portal from Pear Stairs. "You can enter in your dimensions, and change the design and materials as you go, it then calculates a price for you," says Simon. "So we've ended up with a competitively priced, yet bespoke feature. The kitchen, which is cleverly designed to make the most of an awkward shape, boasts the highest quality finishes. The worktops are made from silestone, a quartz/polyester resin compound that has natural anti-bacterial properties. It is also harder and more resilient in terms of knocks, scratches and staining than other solid materials, such as granite.

With the help of Marcus, this phase of the project speeded up and was completed in just six months.

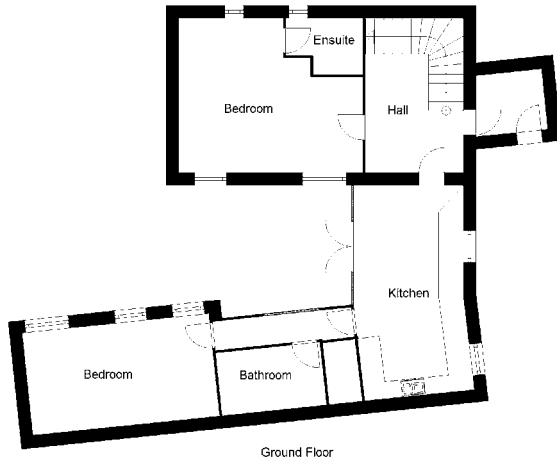


Simon and Sue still love their barn for its "Location, privacy, views and rural aspect," and they are eagerly planning their retirement in the property in the not too distant future, with Simon working on plans for turning an old garage into a detached garden room. In the meantime however, lucky visitors can start their own love affair with Pear Tree Barn; currently the ultimate luxury holiday retreat. ●

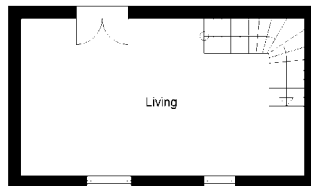
#### Useful contacts

**PEAR TREE BARN IS AVAILABLE AS A HOLIDAY LET** [www.uniquehomestays.com](http://www.uniquehomestays.com) 01637 881942  
**MAIN CONTRACTOR Luxuria Developments** 07793 846722 **PLUMBING AND HEATING INSTALLATION**  
**Lee Woodhatch** 01637 889307 **GROUND SOURCE HEAT PUMP Nu Heat** [www.nu-heat.co.uk](http://www.nu-heat.co.uk) 0800 088 5639  
**STAIRCASE Pear Stairs** [www.pearstairs.co.uk](http://www.pearstairs.co.uk) 01938 553311  
**ROOF Larry Taylor** [www.larrytaylorroofing.co.uk](http://www.larrytaylorroofing.co.uk) 01637 871245 **GLAZING Camel Glass and Glazing** 01209 213465 [www.camelglass.co.uk](http://www.camelglass.co.uk) **KITCHEN WORKTOPS Silestone by Consentino** [www.silestone.co.uk](http://www.silestone.co.uk) 01256 761229

## Floor plans



Ground Floor



First Floor



Plans re-created using ARCON 2D to 3D Visualisation Software for Self-builds, Extensions, Loft & Garage Conversions, Outdoor & Indoor Living including Kitchens & Bathrooms. [www.3darchitect.co.uk](http://www.3darchitect.co.uk), call 01252 339132 or email [arconsales@eleco.com](mailto:arconsales@eleco.com)



## The Hancock file

**Owners** Simon & Sue Hancock

**Occupations** Proprietors of a country pub

**Location** Newquay

**Type of build** Conversion

**Style** Rustic

**Method of construction** Cavity block

**House size** 125m<sup>2</sup> (1,345ft<sup>2</sup>)

**Plot size** 0.25 acres with

the barn, part of a wider 7 acre holding

**Build cost** £141,000

**Cost per m<sup>2</sup>** £1,128 (£105 per ft<sup>2</sup>)

**Plot cost** £555,000 (in 2006)

**Construction period** 2005 - 2011

**Market value** £300,000

## Project cost breakdown

Elements of the build	Cost %	Cost m <sup>2</sup>	Total cost*
<b>Main Contractor</b>	5%	£100	£60,000
<b>Roofs</b>	2.5%	£47	£13,000
<b>Groundworks, re-pointing, septic tank, floors etc</b>	<1%	£11	£15,000
<b>Plumbing (installation &amp; kit)</b>	10%	£200	£25,000
<b>Windows</b>	7.5%	£150	£16,000
<b>Kitchen</b>	2.5%	£54	£12,000
<b>Grand total</b>			<b>£141,000</b>

## OUR VERDICT

The Hancocks have saved these redundant buildings from possible collapse, changed their function and given them a new lease of life. The couple took a sensible approach and took their time with the project, even halting the build at the height of the recession until they were in a more financially stable position.

