



*Sitting area*

With large windows, raw materials and a real fire, the rustic feel is softened by squishy sofas and exquisite linens. Sofas in Dusty Rose and Espresso, Sofa.com. Green bubble lamp, Pooky



# KEEPING IT IN THE FAMILY

*Two decades after living here as newlyweds, Zoe and Geoff Sayers have brought this Devon barn conversion on the family farm into the 21st century*



### ***Kitchen-diner***

In this open-plan space, the kitchen needed to be both functional and beautiful. **Cabinetry** from Howdens is dressed with brass accents. **Knobs**, Wayland Hardware. **Cup handles**, eBay; for similar try Ironmongery Experts



### **AT HOME WITH**

**Owners** Zoe and Geoff Sayers, who moved to the barn in 2000. They now live in the main farmhouse and run the organic dairy farm. They have three children: Plum, 17, Charlie, 13, and Monty, 11.

**House** Ivy Cove is a rustic two-bedroom barn, first converted by Geoff's mother.

Originally an animal shelter with a tin roof, this idyllic barn on the south Devon coast has served the Sayers family since the 1950s. It had become a camping place and a setting for big family parties, until Zoe Sayers' mother-in-law converted it in the 1990s. It became Zoe and her husband Geoff's first home as a newly married couple when they moved back to the family farm 20 years ago. 'It was really, really rustic,' says Zoe. 'There was no fitted kitchen and no bath, so I bought an old roll-top from a reclamation yard.'

The facilities may have been basic, but the barn made up for the lack of amenities by being perfectly placed in the landscape. Nestled against a bank, it has uninterrupted views down a short valley to the sea.


'It's deeply peaceful,' says Zoe. 'The building seems to have grown organically into the landscape.' Both she and Geoff wanted to keep that sense of being close to the natural world when they began the barn's renovation in early 2020, while updating the building in a more contemporary style. First, they secured planning permission to add a dormer window to the main bedroom upstairs, which makes the space feel lighter and more open. After much deliberation, Zoe decided on hardwood-framed windows and doors throughout as a durable answer to the salt-laden winter gales in this exposed location. Downstairs, she >

### **Sitting area**

The real fire provides a welcome focal point. **Side table**, Rockett St George. **Wall lights**, Pooky. **Floor lamp**, Graham and Green. Red striped **decorative item**, Oka. **Walls**, Slaked Lime, Little Greene

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“THE ELM FOR THE FLOORS WAS GROWN ON THE FARM AND THE GRANITE CUT FOR THE STEPS WAS FOUND IN THE SURROUNDING FIELDS”

***Kitchen-diner***

Daughter Plum painted the kitchen chairs in Annie Sloan chalk paint. Zoe is still looking for her perfect kitchen table. **Chairs**, for similar, try Cult Furniture. **Table**, for similar, try Wayfair. **Taps**, The French House





**Entrance hall**

The vaulted ceiling and roof-light enhance the feeling of airiness. **Walls**, Milan, Francesca's Paints. **Tongue and groove** and **cupboards**, Studio Green, Farrow & Ball. **Tiles**, Mandarin Stone

converted an area previously used for storage into a striking entrance hall as well as a second bedroom, which opens onto those huge views.

A simple fireplace ensures the living room is cosy and inviting on wild winter nights, but the barn also has state-of-the-art electric heating. 'Electricity is the cleanest energy source,' says Zoe. 'We have wind turbines and solar panels on the farm, so we're energy neutral now. We're very proud of that.'

Zoe and Geoff's commitment to sound ecological decisions didn't end there. 'I really hate light pollution,' says Zoe, who worries about the impact of additional light on local wildlife. Getting the right balance for the barn wasn't easy, but she and interior designer Siobhan Hayles chose a system of layered lighting, starting with low-level wall lights on sensors. Like all their contractors, Siobhan lives locally.

'I absolutely loved working with Siobhan; it was very collaborative,' says Zoe. 'Geoff and I wanted to chime with the building and Siobhan really heard that.'

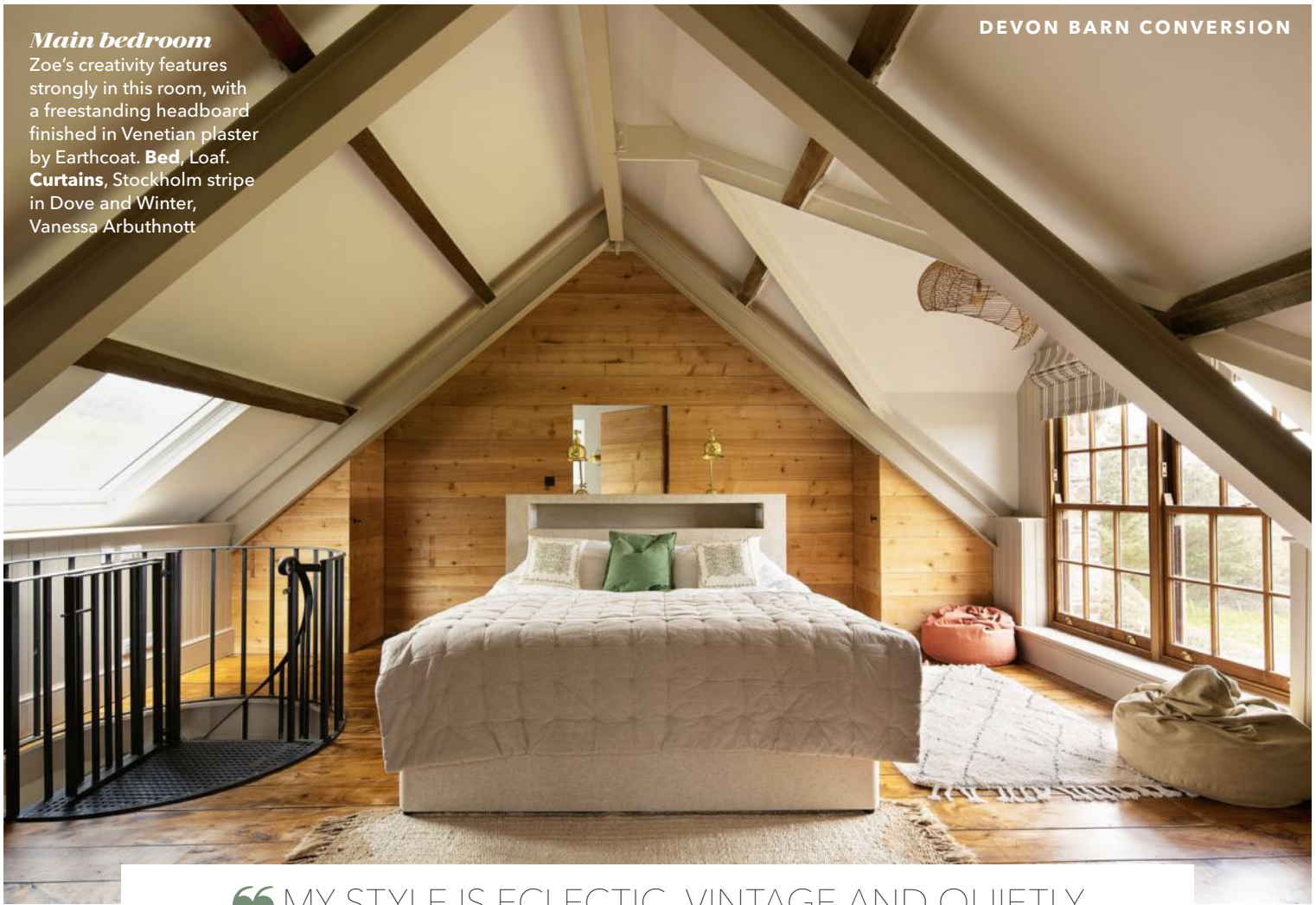
Although Zoe project-managed the renovation, the whole family was involved. 'Everyone chipped in with the work,' says Zoe, whose sons, Charlie and Monty, spent school holidays working on the renovation.

Tackling such a sensitive build would be tricky at the best of times. Doing it during the on/off restrictions of 2020 presented Zoe with all kinds of challenges, >



**Main bedroom**

Zoe's creativity features strongly in this room, with a freestanding headboard finished in Venetian plaster by Earthcoat. **Bed**, Loaf. **Curtains**, Stockholm stripe in Dove and Winter, Vanessa Arbuthnott



“ MY STYLE IS ECLECTIC, VINTAGE AND QUIETLY LUXURIOUS - WITH A TOUCH OF THE ECCENTRIC ”



**Main en suite**

This space is finished throughout in pigmented microcement to create a Mediterranean feel. **Plaster**, Earthcoat. **Woodwork**, Secret Room, Earthborn Paints. **Taps and wash-basins**, Victorian Plumbing



**Cloakroom**

Zoe credits her designer, Siobhan Hayles, with creating a sense of drama in this tiny room. **Basin**, Victorian Plumbing. **Tongue and groove**, Studio Green, Farrow & Ball. **Wallpaper**, Limerence Fern, House of Hackney





## ON OUR DOORSTEP

**Visit...** 'Totnes market on Saturdays for all the foodie stalls. There are so many delicious treats and it's a great place to spend the morning.'

**Shop at...** 'Ben's Farm Shop ([bensfarmshop.co.uk](http://bensfarmshop.co.uk)), Yealmpton. It's a proper independent farm shop selling vegetables and meat; good raw ingredients that are locally produced and organic.'

**Go for a meal at...** 'The Hairy Barista (01803 867773) is always our café and snack stop in Totnes. It's a tiny place, but we love the "build your own drinks" menu.'

particularly when it came to finding materials. 'The project went very slowly, due to Covid, but that actually played into our hands, as we had time to make well-considered design decisions.' These choices really add to the sense of the barn being rooted in the landscape as the front steps are cut from granite found in the surrounding fields and the richly toned elm used for the upstairs floors was grown on the farm. The cedarwood used for the entrance gates and as wall cladding in the main bedroom came from nearby Dartington.

The biggest delays Zoe faced were waiting for the glass factory to reopen and some of the soft furnishings to be delivered, but the need to source things creatively has proven to be an unexpected silver lining. Although much of the furniture is new, some has been repurposed. 'I'm still looking for the ultimate kitchen table,' says Zoe, whose style is eclectic, vintage and quietly luxurious. 'We wanted eccentric. There have been lots of good parties here and you can feel the energy of the place. We didn't want to lose that.'

Open beams, slate floors and a neutral palette create the perfect backdrop for the rich textures and jewel-like colours of the furnishings. 'I'm really proud of the end result. It's cosy, but still very natural,' says Zoe.

**To enquire about renting Ivy Cove, visit [uniquehomestays.com](http://uniquehomestays.com)**