



Comfort & JOY

A long-awaited move was struck by tragedy but happiness was rediscovered with the help of friends and family at this home in Devon

FEATURE ANNIE HARRISON PHOTOGRAPHS COLIN POOLE
STYLING ANNABELLE GRUNDY



The Henley console table and Buckingham mirror from Neptune add to the feeling of tranquility in the entrance hall.



New additions to the sitting room include a wood-burning stove from Dean Forge; Peterstow Contemporary wall lights from Fritz Fryer; and the sisal carpet in Oriental Topaz from Crucial Trading. Greenery gathered locally adds a seasonal touch, along with decorations from John Lewis.



The house flows seamlessly, with a neutral background on which to stamp each room's character

ABOVE The sitting room sofa is from Kingcome Sofas, with cushions covered in Brodie weaves from Nina Campbell, trimmed with Affric in Sienna by Johnstons of Elgin. A feature has been made of an original and integral pillar. The coffee table and sideboard are from Neptune.

RIGHT The main entrance joins the two parts of the house with the kitchen on the left, which is housed in the 'shippon' where animals would once have been kept.



ABOVE RIGHT Stairs lead up to a bedroom created in the hayloft. Recycled timbers were used to block the open space through which hay would have been forked. Fired Earth's Cochineal paint adds a splash of colour to the front door.

LEFT Leading off the sitting room, the cosy snug is where Chelsia retreats to when she wants to watch television.

Returning to live in the West Country had been a long-cherished dream for Chelsia and Christopher Tongue. Christopher had grown up in Somerset, and throughout the years that the couple lived and worked in London, bringing up their two sons, they knew that one day, when they retired, they would turn that dream into reality. In the meantime, they visited the area often – particularly Dartmoor, whose miles of open moorland provided the greatest possible contrast to the busy streets of their home in London, so when the time came for the couple to start planning their retirement, they had a good feel for the area. They often stayed in The Elephant's Nest Inn in a village near Tavistock, where, as luck would have it, a friend who had decided to move closer to Tavistock lived, and whose house Chelsia and Christopher were able to buy.

Although the traditional Dartmoor longhouse was in reasonably good condition, because this was a once-in-a-lifetime move, the Tongues decided to have the house refurbished so they could start the next phase of their lives with their new home exactly as they

wanted. Since the house was Grade II listed, a sensitive approach was needed, so Chelsia and Christopher enlisted a local firm, Woodford Architecture, whose clients include the National Trust, amongst others.

Built in the sixteenth century, the house would have originally been split into two parts – the living quarters and a 'shippon' where animals would have been housed. Traditionally, longhouses were built from local materials and on a slope, with the living quarters on the higher ground. With the animals long gone, the house had already been brought up to modern standards by previous owners. The shippon had been converted into a kitchen, and the hayloft above it was now a bedroom. A new staircase had been built in what is now the entrance hall, and a skylight fitted above, creating a lovely bright space. This meant that no major structural changes were necessary; it was more a matter of working with what was already in place. The couple decided the best course was to stay in London until the work was complete. They agreed a schedule that would enable them to move in with plenty of time to organise their first Christmas in Devon. Christmas celebrations ▶

A simple kitchen from Howdens Joinery, with handles by Clayton Munroe, makes an attractive cooking space. The blinds, in Oxford Red, are from Clarke & Clarke.



RIGHT The Monks Bench settle, painted in Fired Earth's Oak Apple, is from Heartland Interiors and the pendant lights are from Holloways of Ludlow. A dining table from Neptune and chairs from Graham & Green complete the kitchen dining area. The door leads through to the former piggeries, which now house a downstairs loo, a utility room and a boot room.



had always been a big part of their family life in London and they were determined to continue with the tradition in their new home.

The two main challenges were to create a bigger, brighter kitchen that did not feel separated from the rest of the house, and to install central heating. To achieve this, the kitchen was reconfigured to create more space by taking out the old pantry walls and removing an oil-fired boiler. The disused lavatory at the back of the house was converted to house a new gas boiler, which now fires the central heating system. The kitchen was completely gutted and the old, black-tiled floor ripped up. Limestone floor tiles were laid throughout the kitchen and the hallway, creating a unifying feature that successfully ensures the kitchen now feels an integral part of the main house. The new kitchen was fitted with floor-standing cupboards only. It was decided that leaving the walls free enhances the feeling of space and light and makes the most of the

beams. The only other building work that was needed was some damp-proofing and the addition of a new wood-burning stove in the sitting room.

Decorating and furnishing the house was overseen by Sarah Watson from Woodford Architecture who was able to help them create the home they wanted within the house the couple. Originally Chelsia and Christopher had intended to retain their furniture but, reluctantly, they decided most of it was unsuitable – it was too big and although the house has four bedrooms, a large sitting room and a snug, the low ceilings, beams and awkward stairs meant they had to rethink. Painting all the walls in Fired Earth's Flaked White, and the woodwork in Fired Earth's Oak Apple, means the house flows seamlessly, providing a neutral background on which to stamp each room's character. The furniture was chosen specifically to enhance the space available, and the carpets, curtains and blinds to add texture and colour. By August, everything ▶

ABOVE Extra lighting, which is so important above a work surface, is provided by the Anney French Ceramic wall lights by Hector Finch. The Richmond mini range cooker is by Stoves.



Christmas was such a success, everyone singing carols and making merry

ABOVE A cosy bedroom has been created above the kitchen. The throw and cushions are from Osborne & Little, the bedside tables are from The Cotswold Company, and the lamp is from John Lewis.

RIGHT, ABOVE Prismatic Spotlights from Fritz Fryer add light to the master bedroom. The curtains are in Nina Campbell's Strome and the yellow throw is from Jacaranda UK.

RIGHT, BELOW A practical family bathroom has fittings from Bathroom Village.

was ready and Chelsia and Christopher moved in, looking forward to planning their first Christmas in their new home. As their two sons are now settled some distance away – one in Edinburgh, the other in Esher – they were looking forward to welcoming them and starting a new set of family traditions together.

However, an unexpected tragedy occurred; Christopher died just before Christmas and Chelsia's life was turned upside down. Had it not been for the kindness of friends and neighbours, Christmas would have been cancelled. They scooped her up and looked after her, helping her through an unbearably difficult time. The following year, determined to repay their kindness and also set on continuing the new life she had chosen, Chelsia planned her Christmas with her sons and asked all her neighbours round for sherry and mince pies on Christmas Eve. It was such a success, everyone singing carols and making merry, that a new tradition seems to have been established and will take place again this year. The house is decorated, the tree dressed and the invitations sent. And this year, the perfect addition to any family Christmas will make his appearance – a new baby grandson. ■

