



REAL HOMES

Room for romance

Sarah Pitt discovers the perfect Valentine's Day cottage, tucked down a lane in the Dartmoor village of Drewsteignton

There's an enduring appeal in the idea of a romantic hideaway, particularly as thoughts turn to escaping for Valentine's Day. And a thatched cottage called Sojourn, tucked away down a lane in the village of Drewsteignton on Dartmoor, fits this description perfectly.

Owner Jane Lighting admits she was instantly bowled over by its charms when she and her husband Alastair Ross viewed the cottage last summer. The couple, who divide their time between London and a Jacobean farmhouse they've

restored on Dartmoor, were on the lookout for their next interiors project.

The thatched cottage may once have been home to workers at the nearby National Trust stately home Castle Drogo. The property won them over with its prettiness, the inglenook fire-place and the two secret gardens, one leading from the other behind the cottage.

"We absolutely fell in love the first time we saw it," says Jane. "We had been looking for a cottage in the area for about six months, and we had a few false starts. Then, last summer, we saw this

cottage. It was on a private lane, and was very sweet – you wouldn't know it was there!

"The previous owner was a delightful guy, a naval officer, who was getting married and decided he needed to sell the house in order to find a family home for himself and his new wife. He was rather regretfully parting with it. We were the first people to look around – and there were other people coming to view it after us! We got back in the car and said 'this is the one, we need to get started' so we called the estate agent straight away." Jane, a businesswoman whose



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The shower room has an Art Deco style to its fittings

high-flying career has included a spell as head of Channel 5, loves restoring properties in her spare time. For this latest project, she wanted to go for a luxury look, so she enlisted the help of interior designer Paul Hervey who is based not far away, in Chagford.

The creamy exterior of the cottage – a Farrow & Ball shade – was Jane’s starting point for the atmosphere she wanted to create inside, warm and relaxed. “It has a very gentle look to it, and the colours of the outside of the house are reflected in the décor inside,” she says.

Downstairs in the sitting room and luxuriously appointed kitchen, she has indeed gone for cream, as well as touches of red, blue and yellow in the choice of soft furnishings.

“We wanted the overall feel of the cottage to be romantic and traditional, but with a contemporary twist,” says Jane. “The colours were really important. We wanted the colour palette downstairs to be warm and cosy.”

As well as a new woodburning stove in the inglenook, there is now underfloor heating in the kitchen which has a range cooker in case Jane

feels like making a meal rather than heading for the village pub. “It gets very toasty in the cottage!” says Jane. “We also put in those huge cast iron radiators, so that even during the darkest of Dartmoor winters, when you walk into the cottage it is going to be warm and welcoming.”

Upstairs, there is a calm, romantic feel to the decor, with pale aqua and duck egg blue furnishings in the bedroom. The bathroom is themed as a luxury spa room, with a show-stopping freestanding copper bath and massage table.

Many of the fabrics used in the property were sourced from Colefax and Fowler, and Jane Churchill. “We wanted the upstairs to have a much cooler colour scheme, as well as being both calm and relaxing,” says Jane.

The separate shower room has an Art Deco feel, with designer Paul Hervey going for the more muted shade of nickel for the taps and toilet cistern, with its ornate embossed detailing, supplied by Kent-based company Catchpole and Rye.

“The bathroom is a very vintage style, but actually brand new,” says Jane. “I didn’t think I’d

ever spend so much on a loo, but there you go! We really wanted to splash out because it is such a special cottage.”

“The basin was from Catchpole and Rye too. They are really good on the detailing. I think nickel is much more authentic-looking than chrome,” says Paul.

Out in the garden, which is screened from its neighbours by high walls, there is a swing seat and a delightful summer house where lovers could sip champagne. Jane has employed a sturdy stone receptacle for putting the drinks on ice. “It is actually a Chinese rice bowl,” she says. “It is made of granite and weighs a ton but it is the perfect wine cooler.”

While the plan is very much to invite others to enjoy the cottage, which is being let out as a holiday cottage. Jane and Alastair may well, though, spend Valentine’s Day here themselves this year. “That’s an idea,” says Jane.

The couple have their own romantic tale to tell. “We have known each other since we were teenagers, his best friend and my best friend were brother and sister. Then Alastair got married and I got married - but not to each other! His wife sadly died. We met up nine years ago. He was a single dad with a three kids and the rest is history! It took us a while, but we got there in the end.”

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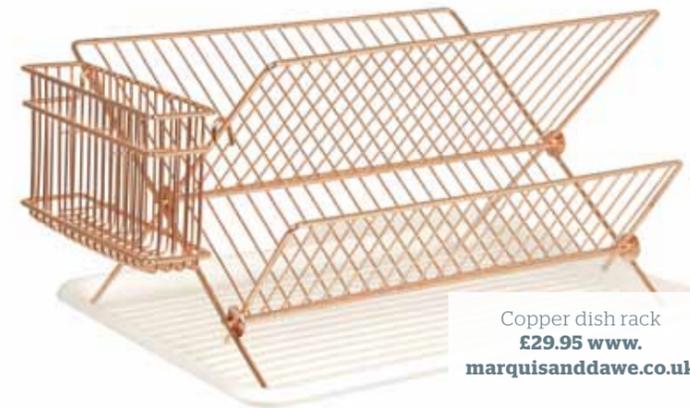
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