



Weir Cottage was built over 100 years ago by the Duke of Bedford as his fishing lodge, within the Endsleigh Estate

Above  
Deborah's  
collection of Poole  
Pottery is displayed  
on the landing

wood-burning stove in it, with a slab of granite from the original damp course used as a mantel. "I just wanted something that was part of the house to recycle over the fireplace," explains Deborah.

The original tiny kitchen and pantry, where they uncovered a matching fireplace, is now their dining room, which they also like to call the 'black and white room' because of the art collection on the walls. The largest piece is a painting over the fireplace of their previous house by international artist, David Prentice. This is complemented by a collection of etchings by Welsh artist, Colin See-Paynton, printed in reverse on wood.

A small wooden shutter still hangs across the top half the north-facing window – a quaint reminder of its past use as a pantry – while pretty antique honey pots and dishes decorate the sill. John is amazed, "the original solid oak windows are over 100 years old, single-glazed and still have no rot."

A granite step into the large, bright, oak fitted kitchen is the only clue to it having been the original outside entrance. Even the outside loo has been turned into a valuable little larder, complete with the original wooden door. Apparently, "you could sit on the loo with a cup of tea and look down the valley!" Deborah always wanted a larder and jokes: "We've got Nigella to thank for that. I'm just looking for the red satin dressing gown to go with it!"

Large windows at the front allow light to pour into the kitchen, while the rear window opens onto a steep bank covered in primroses and snowdrops in the

spring, followed by pretty shades of heather, and it's here that Yvette has been spied laying eggs in the white heather!

"We always wanted an Aga but we didn't want the heat in the summer," explains Deborah. They overcame the problem, visually and practically, by integrating into the design a 3-oven Aga (for the winter) and a conventional electric cooker module (for the summer) so that it looks like one big Aga.

The original staircase rises from the dining room onto a surprisingly bright, spacious north-facing landing where Deborah displays her very collectable Poole pottery and each upstairs room takes in dramatic views down through the gardens to the river.

Outside, the steep, terraced gardens bring surprises at every level. Deborah lines tall chimney pots outside the house ready to be filled with trailing geraniums; a tiny pond is crammed with frogs returning every year to lay their spawn; an established wisteria archway leads to a large greenhouse with an amusing display of metal watering cans hanging along the handrail. Looking down a level, your eye catches a quirky piece of art in the middle of four raised beds – a large galvanised watering can, pouring water, suspended in mid air! An old-fashioned, circular pig trough draped in ivy is now a giant bird bath, while leftover granite from one of the cottage windows has been fashioned into a garden seat (inspired by a visit to Cotehele).

Copper mining, forestry, fruit and vegetable growing and fishing have all left their mark in and around Weir Cottage as you walk around the gardens. The most



enchanting and unusual reminder is the Tea House – the last one of eight built along the Tamar by the Duke of Bedford that is still standing.

Recently renovated by Mark Snellgrove, the tiny, beautifully built 'house' is clad in pitch pine, and still has the original fireplace, floorboards, panelling and cupboards to store the tea service. Apparently, wherever there was a beat (a calm area of water

created by a 'croy' for fishing salmon), the Duchess could take a rest from fishing and sit by the fire at a small table with her ghillie and maid, and be served tea or soup by a waitress.

The Garners plan a grand opening when the Tea House is completed. Maybe they will have tea with the Duchess of Bedford – just like the old days. □

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PHOTOS: COURTESY OF JOAKIM BOREN



The west-facing  
master bedroom