

## REAL HOMES

# A labour of love

**This run-down home, bought at auction, turned out to be a historic Dartmoor manor dating back to the 1300s. Becky Sheaves discovers how it has been brought back to life, with care, attention and plenty of patience...**

**B**ack in 2014, GP Geoff Edwards and his wife Sue – who had worked as a nurse – were on the hunt for a new project to get their teeth into once they retired from their busy working lives.

A local estate agent in Tavistock came up with the answer: “Have you looked at Staddon House?” he said. “It is in need of a lot of TLC but you might just like it.”

“When an estate agent admits a house is in need of TLC, you know you’ve got a project on your hands,” says Geoff. “And he was right, it was basically a wreck.”

Fast forward three years, however, and this ancient Dartmoor house, dating back to medieval times, is a thing of true beauty. Geoff and Sue have worked to create a home that honours its long history while also being comfortable and practical for today’s family life.

“I’ll be honest, Sue must take the credit for how the house looks,” says Geoff. “She was the one who devised all the colour schemes and interiors, picked all the paints and generally made every room look lovely.”

The couple bought the house at auction for £250,000 – a bargain, you might say, for a three-

bedroomed property with a large garden in Walkhampton near Yelverton on the western side of Dartmoor. However, the house was in “terrible” condition, as Geoff explains: “It had been treated really badly over the years but, because it was listed and also within the Dartmoor National Park, there were so many conditions that we had to follow when it came to working on it.” Geoff admits that he and Sue have spent more than the cost of buying the house on restoring it.

The property dates back to the 1300s. “When we were working on one of the fireplaces, we pulled it out, found another behind it and behind that was a beautiful carved granite fireplace that our archaeologist dated to 1500s,” says Geoff. The fireplace, which also has a bread oven and a little shelf for a tinder box, is now a proud feature of the main sitting room, complete with a new wood burner supplied by Kernow Fires of Wadebridge.

The couple also uncovered ancient beams and

rafters, some from the 1300s, and, hidden in walls, not one but two stone staircases. “We preserved them as room features which do not lead anywhere. Then we had a new glass staircase made with maple wood treads – very light, very unobtrusive, allowing the original stonework and features to be seen.”

Exeter-based architect Kirsty Curnow-Bailey of Living Space Architects planned the restoration. “It is all very honest,” says Geoff. “Where there is an original feature, we have tried to celebrate it. Where something is new, we acknowledge that and do not try to make our additions seem original.” An original beam needed reinforcing, but the steel rafter bolted on to it is left exposed and painted with red oxide.

Outside, the house had its concrete render chipped off and replaced with traditional lime render from Cornish Lime Co, based just outside Bodmin. Taking advice from the Dartmoor National Park’s heritage team, the front UPVC

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