

The original house



A Royal Fishing Lodge

Weir Cottage may seem like a little cottage on a remote bank of the River Tamar but it has a big history and some impressive royal connections, writes Francesca Smith

Halfway from Northamptonshire, whilst driving down to view the property four years ago, John and Deborah Garner were told: "Sorry, we've sold it - I'm afraid you'll have to turn back." Luckily, a few days later, the sale fell through and they headed back down to Devon, spending half an hour looking at the house and 3½ hours in the garden. They offered the asking price that afternoon - Cup Final Day - quite a result!

Below Deborah and John Garner

In September, they moved into what was then a

'two-up, two-down' with an outside loo and shed, hidden in an opening at the bottom of 1,000 acres of woodland, with dreams of creating their retirement home with their two dogs, Dusky and Sky, and three exotic chickens, Helga, Mimi and Yvette (named after characters in *'Allo, 'Allo*).

The Garners were fascinated by the history of Weir Cottage, which had been built over 100 years ago by the Duke of Bedford as his fishing lodge, within the Endsleigh estate. It was lived in later by his ghillie (water bailiff), and then by forestry workers, before being left empty and eventually sold.

It took six months to gain planning permission for the extension, which included a brief to have views from every room. "It was a total risk, as we did not know if it was protected," explains John. The plans, drawn up by Plymouth architects Living Space, "went through with flying colours" and in July, Saltash builders AD Williams turned up to start work with their diggers "on the first day of the wettest summer for years - when it rained and rained and rained."

By the following March, Weir Cottage had been transformed into a comfortable, three-bedroom house with a large kitchen, complete with Aga. The icing on the cake was the impressive oak-decked area outside the kitchen, which completely opened up the narrow pathway directly in front of the house, to take in the

The icing on the cake was the impressive oak-decked area outside the kitchen, taking in the views up and down the valley, along the River Tamar and across to Cornwall

