

*'Wherever we could, we mirrored details from the original house'*



**THIS PICTURE** The master bedroom – which has a double aspect – looks fresh and neutral. The rattan bed has a Far Eastern look and was bought from John Lewis



**JOHN SHARES HIS RENOVATING ADVICE**

'Planning departments like to ensure the original building will still be identifiable after alterations are completed. We took great care that ours would be and it speeded up the consent process significantly.'

'It is well worth spending a little extra on finishes in keeping with the era; for example, we paid a bit more to have metal rather than plastic drainpipes. It would have been foolish to spoil the whole exterior of our period cottage for the sake of saving a few pounds.'



1810, in the fashion of the times for a peasant-type haven, commissioned a rural retreat to be built there.

When, decades later, the Bedfords required a fishing lodge, they built the cottage itself and also the small wooden teahouse that still stands in the garden – it would have been a place for anglers to shelter on a day's fishing (and perhaps for lovers to keep a secret tryst).

While their building work was going on, the Garners moved into rented accommodation. 'But we'd pop back most days to check on the progress and landscape the grounds,' John says.

They were also enthusiastically designing their future sun deck: a wooden terrace that would extend over the hillside and be supported on pillars. Deborah explains: 'We wanted a place where we could sit and savour that beautiful river view, and the area outside the kitchen gets sun all day long.'

Later, they would eventually decide to employ a local master carpenter to construct their deck but, in the meantime, the builders started work on the

extension and, once that was finished, they were able to begin renovating the original part of the house.

'I suspected there might be a large Victorian fireplace in the dining room because there's one on the opposite side of the chimney in the sitting room,' John recalls. 'So I asked the builder to knock away the plaster until finally this hole appeared; now we can enjoy our meals beside a burning log fire.'

The Garners' last task was the kitchen and, having been reluctant to commission an expensive bespoke solid wood one, they settled for a Magnet kitchen with veneered units in Rustic Oak. 'It looks the same to us but it cost a fraction of the price,' says John.

With the work finally complete, he and Deborah can sit out on their new deck with a well-deserved glass of wine. 'And put the world to rights until the sun goes down,' he says laughing.

'We spend a lot of time out on the deck,' Deborah adds, 'the view is so picturesque and relaxing. The house now has everything we could ever want from a home.'

**OPPOSITE TOP LEFT** Glass bottles and pretty soaps are displayed in the bathroom.

**OPPOSITE TOP RIGHT**

The new bathroom echoes the 1900s feel of the rest of the cottage, with a wood panelled bath and wall tiles chequered in pastel colours

**TOP** John and Deborah at their cottage

**ABOVE LEFT** Among the items on the bedroom windowsill are a wooden pork pie mould, a bobbin of checked ribbon and a decorative tin of talcum powder

**ABOVE** The teahouse in the garden was built to provide shelter for the fishing guests