

A CORNISH CHRISTMAS

Gloria Sheppard waited five years for her dream home to come up for sale in Mousehole. Now, it's a serene, Scandi-style haven, ideal for festivities

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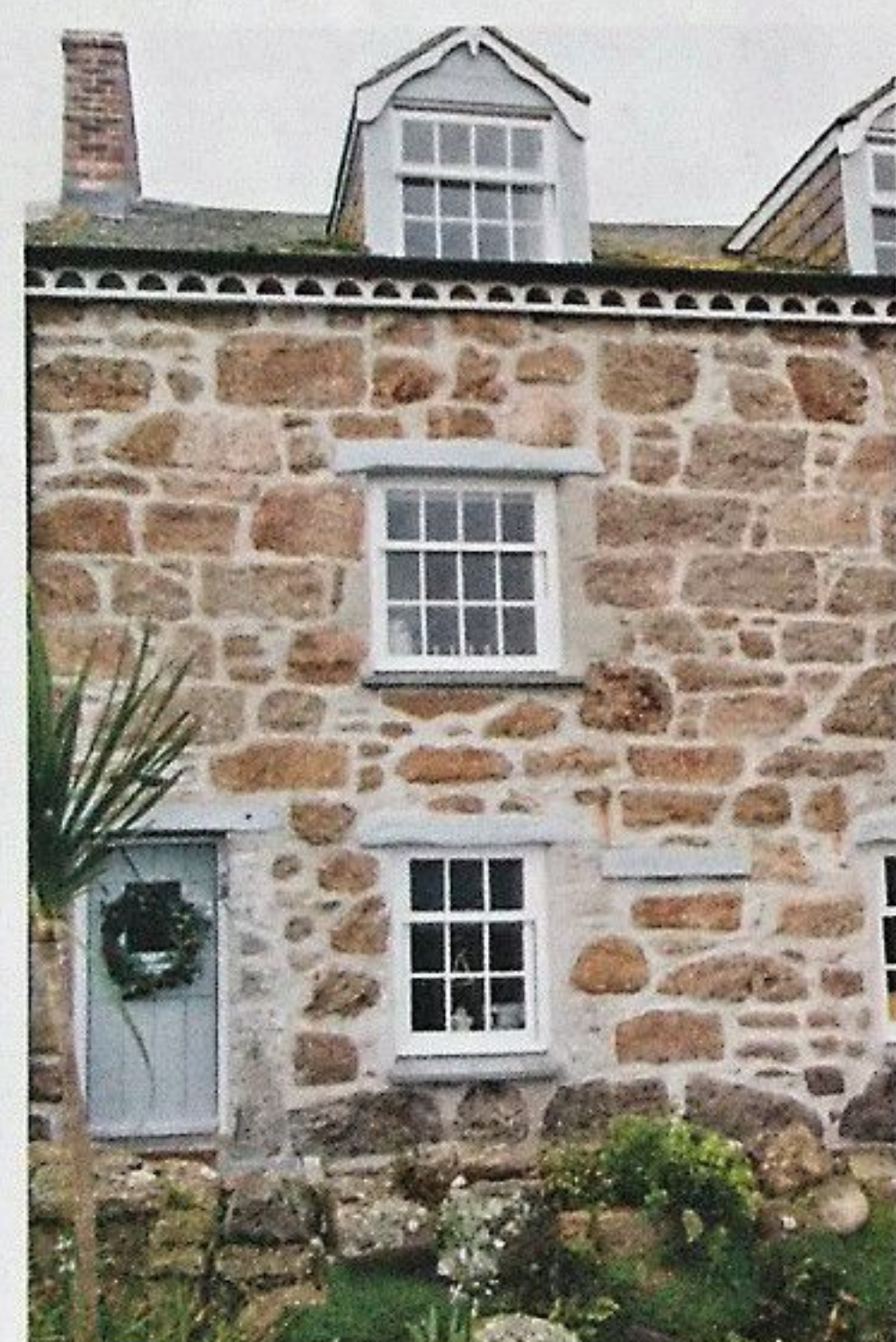
Beside the historic harbour at Mousehole stand seven stone-built fishermen's cottages on a quiet, traffic-free road from which you can hear the sea.

'It's a haven of tranquillity,' agrees Gloria Sheppard, who is lucky enough to own a property here.

After visiting a friend's holiday cottage in 2007, Gloria, an office manager from Monmouth in Wales, fell in love with Mousehole and had her heart set on buying a house by the seafront – but ended up waiting five years before the opportunity arose. 'I had almost given up,' she says. 'We had holidays here as a family, renting different places, often twice a year. We were set on finding somewhere right on the front in Mousehole. It had to be there, and only there.'

When a Grade II-listed, seafront cottage finally appeared on Rightmove, Gloria, her husband, Jon, and their son, Rory, 17, rushed down to see it. 'It's nearly a nine-hour round trip,' she recalls. 'We did the viewing and stood on the terrace and said, "Yes, we'll pay this on the condition no one else sees the cottage." We knew there and then it was our dream.'

Happily, the purchase went through



smoothly in September 2015. However, the cottage, which dates back to the 1800s, was in need of renovation, and the layout also required a re-think as the utility room had the best sea view. 'We decided to move it,' says Gloria, 'to make the kitchen a better shape and to take full advantage of the view from the window.'

Finding the right person to carry out the refurbishment took time too, and the Sheppards waited 18 months before work began in May 2016. 'One of the hardest things was living 240 miles away and managing the



THIS PICTURE Gloria in the dining area. Karen of Ladrarn, Newlyn Dawn Landing is a painting by artist Henrietta Graham, depicting a local fisherman at work. The table and dining chairs are from Loaf



'Being in MOUSEHOLE is like stepping BACK IN TIME, I wanted the HOUSE TO FEEL just as TRANQUIL'



TOP The milk churn, used as an umbrella stand, is from Didier & Dandelion, while the vintage wooden sled from Nordic House adds to the Scandi feel ABOVE 'George Robinson is a fantastic local cabinet maker and the finish is exquisite,' says Gloria of her kitchen units



THIS PAGE The silver and white Christmas decorations suit the Nordic theme. The woodburner (left) is from Jøtul and the decorative panel (above) by Nordic House

house feel enclosed. 'The coastal light that spills through the windows is fantastic and nothing like the light we have at home in Wales,' she says. 'I drew on natural colours of grey, white and washed-out blues, adding textures in the fabrics and furnishings to catch the eye. All of the original orange varnished woodwork has been sanded back and painted to enhance the grain, and the stone walls painted white with the slightest hint of grey.'

SEASONAL CHEER

Soft neutral tones and cosy fabrics flow throughout the cottage – now called Higher Saltponds – with Scandi undertones evoking the restful and rustic ambience Gloria sought. Vintage furniture and quirky found objects help to add warmth and personality. 'The highlight of my project was finding vintage pieces, like the coal scuttle and milk churn, where I currently store

project from a distance,' says Gloria. 'I used to visit every week, sometimes sleeping on the floor in a sleeping bag with no light, no water and no power and having to use the loo on the quay! I just couldn't pay to stay somewhere every time I came. Sometimes the builder would call and ask me a question and I'd have to go down and look – sometimes I would drive there and back in a day.'

A SENSITIVE UPDATE

The project took more than a year to complete. Luckily, Gloria wasn't working at the time so had the flexibility to travel. 'I wanted everything to be just right,' she explains. 'Being in Mousehole is like stepping back in time, and I was keen for the cottage to feel just as tranquil.' Gloria threw herself into research for the interiors, sometimes driving for hours to confirm or reject an idea. 'I'm not a designer, so this experience was completely new to me. The sofa and

chairs were a big purchase and I drove to Loaf's London showroom so that I could see the quality up close and try them out.'

NORDIC NEUTRALS

The new kitchen needed to make use of the space under the stairs, and quotes from high street kitchen shops were comparable with a local bespoke cabinet maker, who produced a much stronger design. 'George Robinson is a fantastic cabinet maker and the finish is exquisite,' Gloria says. On his recommendation, Gloria visited stonemasons to look at granite for the worktop, resulting in a complete U-turn on the kitchen style.

'I saw a beautiful slab of white-grey-black granite and was blown away,' she explains. 'Rather than have a light worktop and oak floors, I've gone for granite with black slate flooring.' Gloria also changed her mind about the colour of the



cupboards. 'The grey I'd picked out at home looked much darker in the coastal light. I was surprised to find Farrow & Ball's Peignoir, with a hint of pink, works really well.'

Gloria loves bold colours but knew instinctively to paint the rooms white, brightening the heavy wood beams and dark floors that had made the





CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT The cabinet is Re Loved By Me; Gloria chose seating with a firm back so she could display her cushions; the alcove by the stairs is an elegant corner to curl up in with a book; the Theo coffee table is from Swoon Editions, the stone bowl by Baileys Home

umbrellas. I painted the coal scuttle in a chalk paint and use it as a side table in the living room.' She has also bought pieces of local art to hang in the cottage. 'Mousehole still has a close-knit fishing community and I wanted art to reflect and remind us of that,' says Gloria.

In the master bedroom Gloria found that her organisational skills paid off. 'I had notes on the room dimensions so I knew the wardrobe would fit under the eaves,' says Gloria, who came across the beach hut-shaped piece on Gumtree for £70. 'I painted the wood in chalk paint and the rest of the room flowed from there,' she says. The throw (a design called 'Wave') was found at a Welsh wool mill not far from their home. 'The blue plaid looks perfect here and the name clinched it!'

For Christmas, the family like to come to Mousehole, where the famous festive harbour lights are a draw for visitors from far and wide.

In keeping with the overall feel of the house, Gloria decorates it very simply: 'The Christmas tree shape has to be right, and this year I've chosen silver and white decorations. I have some new matt-white baubles with a feather on top. But I won't overdo it.' It is a lovely time of year for the family to relax together, she adds: 'I cook with lots of local produce and then we walk off our meal on the beach with our two Labradors.'

When the family aren't using the property, it's let to holidaymakers. 'I can't believe the cottage is ours and I'm overwhelmed that visitors love it, too,' Gloria says. 'We visit regularly and plan to retire here – at least part time – when the time is right. Until then, we are delighted to let others come and see the Mousehole magic for themselves.'

◆ Higher Saltponds is available to let via saltpondshouse.com.



ABOVE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT Fish candles cast a soft light; the use of white in the bathroom draws the eye towards the grey vanity unit; all the Christmas decorations are in keeping; the 'Wave' throw is from Sioni Rhys Handweavers

GLORIA'S MOUSEHOLE ADDRESS BOOK

• **Mousehole Christmas Lights** (mouseholelights.org.uk) provides breathtaking displays for around three weeks every year over Christmas and New Year. Now in its 55th year, a must-see for adults and children alike.

• **Mousehole Beach and Harbour** is ideal for young families, with safe swimming and paddling within the harbour walls along with a wonderful sandy beach. An old-fashioned family-beach-and-ice-cream sanctuary.

• **The Old Coastguard** (01736 731222, oldcoastguardhotel.co.uk) is a small hotel in a brilliant location with the garden running down to the sea. Spectacular views, very relaxing; family- and dog-friendly. Pop in for drinks in the garden or hunker down inside and watch the storm with a hot chocolate if it's blowy!

• **The Sea Salts & Sail Festival** (seasalts.co.uk) is a biennial maritime festival held in Mousehole, founded more than 20 years ago to preserve the identity of the village and celebrate its history. There are rowing and sailing races, children's activities, live music, cookery demonstrations, traditional crafts and plenty of food and drink.

• Nearby **St Michael's Mount** (01736 710265, stmichaelsmount.co.uk) is a striking castle on an island, accessed by walking across the causeway at low tide or boat crossing at other times.