

Living room

The Monterosso blue velvet corner sofa from Made is the perfect fit between beams, while the old groyne pillars from a docking yard were from Hadlow Down Antiques, along with the lamps. Tamsin chose the antique cow in homage to the barn's history, from an antique shop in The Netherlands



PERFECTLY FRAMED

A pared-back mix of vintage and antique pieces lets the oak frame do the talking in Tamsin and Paul Clarke's barn home

Exterior

Tamsin and Paul moved out of London 12 years ago so they could bring up their children in the countryside. The barn is their second home in the Sussex countryside and was once a cow shed on a farm estate



Tamsin and Paul Clarke love a project and can't help but feel the itch to move every six or seven years - they've owned Victorian houses in London, a Georgian house in Ramsgate and sold a farmhouse in East Sussex to buy this barn. 'We can't imagine moving to a modern property because our furniture and belongings are antique, vintage or repurposed, they're our passion,' says Tamsin.

Even so, the couple had reservations when they first saw this building. 'It wasn't love at first sight,' Tamsin admits. 'Although the old beams were incredible, the beauty of the oak was lost in the busy decor. Three of the bedrooms were downstairs and the huge living room was on the first floor.'

But the glorious oak barn, with its five bedrooms, swimming pool, outbuildings and a two-acre paddock, was just too good to pass by, so they lived with the challenges for a few years while they made plans. 'One of the villagers told us he used to milk the cows here,' says Tamsin. 'We wanted to embrace the barn's heritage and put the focus back on the oak beams.'

The couple got rid of the faux French fireplaces and pink carpets, and took down a wall to join the dining room with the kitchen. A first floor bathroom became another bedroom. One major discussion was whether to move the first-floor living room downstairs. 'It's the kind of amazing space you expect to see in a barn, so it felt wrong to move it downstairs, where we would have had to put up internal walls,' says Tamsin.

Tamsin and Paul wanted to pare back the decoration to emphasise the oak beams but were unsure about colour schemes. They took advice from Heidi Francis at Flint, who suggested Zoffany's Half Mushroom. 'Heidi's choice turned out to be genius. It's the perfect neutral that brings the house together.'

The couple played around with furniture and accessories - the phase in a project Tamsin enjoys most - re-using pieces from previous homes, and adding recent buys from antiques shops and fairs. 'I get ideas when I'm wandering around the markets,' says Tamsin. 'For instance, we needed big lights in the living room; I saw the cockerel cages and made them into lampshades. And the marine groyne pillars look great as chunky lamp stands.'

Selling their Georgian holiday home meant finding a new way to display their collection of oil paintings. 'The Victorian portraits in ornate gold frames looked glorious in our Georgian property but too elaborate in here,' says Tamsin. 'I removed the frames and now the dark colours look great against the pale walls.'

The couple were conscious about repurposing as much as they could, in tune with the barn that had been reconfigured into their new home. They're delighted to be able to fully appreciate the craftsmanship and history of the oak frame now.

'The barn has amazing bones and the space absorbs us and guests with ease. I had a brilliant birthday with a big table set-up in the open barn outside,' says Tamsin. 'But the itch to move is back and we're keeping our eye out for the next project.'

**AT HOME WITH**

Owners Tamsin and Paul Clarke run a lettings business and bought the property in 2015 for themselves and their sons, Zach, 14 and Jake, 10.

House A six-bedroom barn in an East Sussex hamlet with a Norman church at the heart, at the foot of the South Downs.

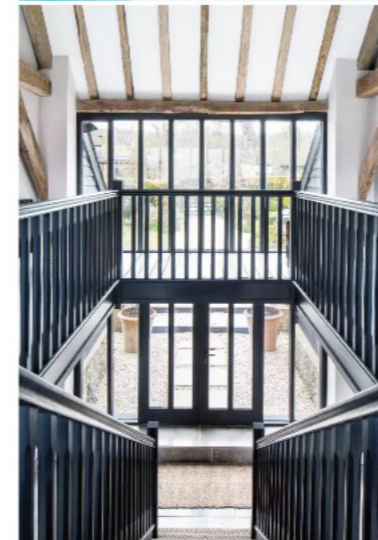
“VINTAGE AND
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Kitchen
Removing wall cupboards and
switching the colour palette
from creams to grey-blue
tones created a modern
country look. The Neptune
Henley cupboards are painted
in Salt. The island is painted in
Little Greene's Basalt, while
Nisbets has similar stools



Dining area

The portraits are a random collection from various places, including Lots Road Auctions; their dark colours are picked up by black details in the room. Tamsin stripped the varnish from the rectory table from Threadgold Studio, which is the ideal size for seating the family and guests. The original Tolix and Indian café chairs are from Ardingly Antiques Fair



Exterior

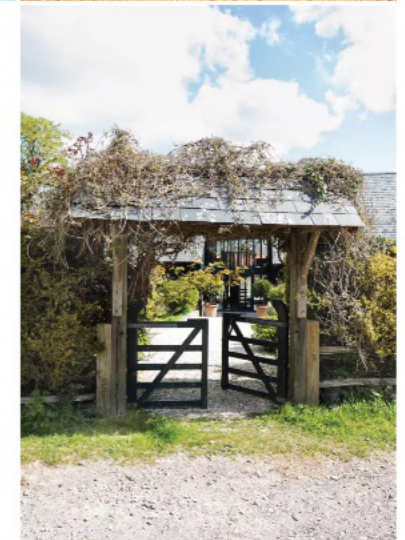
The landscaped garden has transformed the outside into a stylish social space enjoyed by everyone.

Living room

The full effect of the pitched roof and original beams is best admired on the first floor. A large sisal rug from County Carpets frames the seating area and Tamsin bought the cockerel cages from Ardingly Antiques Fair to turn into oversized lampshades above. Opposite, the TV is discreetly hidden inside an antique cabinet.

Kitchen

Tamsin wanted lots of drawer space and liked the solid oak and combination of plain and moulded styles within Neptune's Henley kitchen collection. The oil painting is from Lots Road Auctions.





Main bedroom
Tamsin found the headboard on Facebook Marketplace, prompting the green colour scheme; Made's Roscoe bed is similar, as is Next's Hamilton bedspread. The chair was Paul's mum's that Tamsin had reupholstered.

Guest bedroom
This is Tamsin's favourite room after purchasing the rustic shutters at Ardingly Antiques Fair. The floral oil paintings came from various antiques shops in Ramsgate. Green cushion and Ranarp wall light, both Ikea. Walls painted in Little Green's Slaked Lime.

Upstairs bathroom
The bath beneath the sloping beams didn't need changing so Tamsin just painted the feet black for a different feel. Cinna side table is similar, Wayfair. Basket, Matalan



FEATURE JANE CRITTENDEN PHOTOGRAPHS JAMES FRENCH STYLING MARISHA TAYLOR



ON OUR DOORSTEP

Visit... The National Trust's Monk's House where Virginia Woolf lived (nationaltrust.org.uk) and Charleston, the creative hub for the Bloomsbury set (charleston.org.uk).

Shop at... The local farmer's market on a Friday in Lewes for great seasonal produce. Pop into Lewes Flea market (flea-markets.co.uk) for a browse and to Closet & Botts, which sells beautiful gifts and homewares (closetandbotts.com).

Go for a meal... at The Juggs (thejuggs.co.uk), a pub at the foot of the South Downs, where you'll find great walks (southdowns.gov.uk), Flint Owl Bakery (flintowlbakery.com) sells fantastic coffee, breads and bakes, too.

Bedroom

Re-using belongings gave this room a head start with an antique marble-topped table and antique mirror from their Georgian house; similar can be found at Pamono. The wall lights came from Tamsin's former office; Prismatic glass pendant is similar, E2 Contract Lighting