

Unique!

TRUE STORIES • IDEAS & SOLUTIONS • INSPIRATIONAL STYLE

25 BEAUTIFUL HOMIES

People like you...
created the homes inside –
take a look!

BUMPER ISSUE

Watermill ■ Schoolhouse ■ Stableblock & MORE!

April 2000
£2.60



COVER STORY 'The house was way beyond our means – but we had to have it!' See P32

Particulars

LOCATION

Somerset Levels

AGE

Early 1800s

BUILDING

Stone cottage with shop attached

ROOMS

Shop, office, new garden room extension with dining area, shower and wc, 2 living rooms, kitchen, 5 bedrooms, bathroom

MOVED IN

1989

PURCHASE PRICE

£150,000

RESTORATION COSTS

Around £42,000



1 Audrey at her post in the shop. The counter was made by Ben Skinner (01458 210133)

2 In the sitting room, pitch pine panelling surrounds the inglenook fireplace. The chair was found in a skip in Wells and re-covered with a new seat. Through the doorway is the shop with its neatly stacked shelves



When Audrey Warner was three years old she sat on the counter in the village shop at Moorlynch in Somerset and ate biscuits. Now she is the postmistress and shopkeeper, and dispenses biscuits to a new generation of three-year-olds.

In 1989 the property came on to the market when the previous owner retired. Audrey's 16-year-old daughter Clare had always wanted to run a shop. "If you buy it, I'll look after it, Mum," she said, but then she moved to Australia and left me to run it," Audrey says matter-of-factly. "I had a half-day training course in running a post office, and ▷

Stamp of approval

Audrey and Gordon Warner have turned their shop and post office into a charming home at the centre of village life



The garden room's woodburner is from Sandpits Heating (01458 251476). The butler's tray is by Somerset Creative Products (01934 712416) and the wrought-iron candlesticks were made by Martin Skidmore (01458 210897)



1 On the kitchen dresser (made by Ben Skinner, 01458 210133) is a lovely bread crock by local potter Clio Graham (01458 210977). The kitchen leads through to the snug

2 The Warners enjoy a sunny moment in the garden

3 In the bathroom, a collection of old straw hats hangs above a Lloyd Loom laundry basket. The chair cost £5 from Pinera (01458 446567) and was painted blue

4 Local carpenter Tony Taylor (01458 210809) made the French windows in the garden room. At £60, the oak dining table was Audrey's biggest expenditure. The ladderback chair belonged to the previous owner

5 A carved French bed, made up with pretty antique bed linen, graces the guest bedroom



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25 Good ideas

Audrey's antique French bed lends great charm to the guest bedroom. If you'd like a similar bed, *The Antique Bed Shop* in Halstead, Essex deals exclusively in wooden beds. Call 01787 477346 for an information pack. *Manor Farm Antiques* in Standlake, Oxon has antique brass, iron and wooden bedsteads, all restored to the highest standards. Mattresses and bases can also be made to order. Call 01865 300303.

'I like everything to look expensive but to pay next to nothing!'



then I went to the cash-and-carry and bought all the things I would want myself.

The Georgian house and shop were in an advanced state of neglect and it took six months to clear out and remove old wiring, floorboards and windows. A team of friends moved in to scrub, paint and put new stock on the shop shelves. Audrey still displays some of the 50-year-old groceries they discovered, including a Blue Bird Toffee tin and old packets of wartime Bird's Custard Powder.

With the shop up and running, the Warners turned their attention to their home, knocking out a wall between the kitchen and dining room to create a second sitting room – the 'snug' – and then planning an extension. They wanted somewhere large enough to hold

parties and celebrate village occasions. The garden room, designed by a local farmer, Stuart Heal, holds over 100 people and opens out onto a lawn and vine-covered pergola.

In furnishing her home, Audrey has demonstrated her talent for sniffing out a bargain. 'I like everything to look really expensive but to pay next to nothing for it,' she says, with a twinkle. Most of the furniture cost no more than a few pounds, and Audrey made all the curtains from sales fabric at £2 a yard.

The shop is a magnet to people from several villages and it is hard to call in for a pint of milk or a stamp without settling down for a chat and a gossip. And with their garden room in continual use, Audrey and Gordon's home really is the hub of village life. **GB**



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