

Modern barn conversion

With no experience of major renovation projects, Victoria and Wayne Cresswell took a derelict barn and transformed it – with stunning results – into their dream spacious home

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Right There were two old barns on Victoria's father's farm. The couple (above) wanted to convert one into a family home – but it needed a lot of work



BEFORE



A new roof was added and the brickwork was cleaned and repointed. Hardwood double-glazed windows by Barlow Joinery were installed, with frames painted in a bespoke cream shade by Dulux

The Shaker-style kitchen suits the barn's rustic style, with units by Neptune Furniture, which were supplied by Belvoir Interiors, and a Rangemaster cooker from Roy Waring Appliances. The blind fabric is from Betta Blinds

FACT FILE

THE OWNERS

Victoria Cresswell, who is a flight attendant, and her husband Wayne, a mining supervisor, live here with their two sons, Lewis, seven, and Freddie, four

THE PROPERTY

A three-bedroom detached barn conversion

THE LOCATION

Tuxford, Nottinghamshire

WHAT THEY SPENT

The couple have spent around £270,000 converting the barn, which has been recently valued at around £325,000



When Victoria and Wayne Cresswell decided to put their detached bungalow on the market, they were not planning to take on a barn conversion project.

'Our bungalow had three bedrooms, but they were of unequal size,' says Victoria. 'Our son Lewis' room was large, while our other son Freddie's was much smaller. As the boys grew bigger, we wanted them to have the same size bedrooms.'

The couple started searching for a larger home and put in an offer for what seemed the perfect property. Everything was going smoothly until the last minute, when the sellers pulled out of the sale.

'We were devastated,' says Victoria.

Victoria's father, who owns a farm, came up with a solution, suggesting they restore one of the derelict barns on his land.

'My parents' farm had two barns that had

fallen into disrepair,' says Victoria. 'When we first started house-hunting, the idea of converting one of them and living there hadn't crossed our minds – but it seemed a viable option once we considered it.'

Now, with hindsight, Victoria and Wayne were pleased the sale hadn't gone ahead.

'Although it was a large property with good sized rooms, it had a small garden,' says Victoria. 'It was just as well that the other place fell through. We realised that living on the farm would give the boys several acres to play on and we would be there for my parents as they got older.'

With no experience of barn conversions, the couple called in an architect to draw up the initial plans to see if they could secure planning permission to turn the derelict barn into a family home.

'We were thrilled when we were given the

go ahead for planning permission,' says Victoria. 'However, when we looked at the plans in detail, we realised that they weren't quite right for us. There were plenty of rooms in the new redesign, but none of any significant size, so we asked the architect to change the layout.'

The new plans included creating an upper floor in the barn, comprising a large master bedroom with an en suite, as well as two bedrooms of equal size for their sons and a family bathroom. The couple also wanted an open-plan layout on the ground floor, with the entrance hall leading to a spacious living area on the left and a kitchen-diner on the right.

'When we submitted the new plans to the local authority, we also applied for planning permission to add an extension to the barn,' says Victoria. 'We wanted the house to be as ►



The living room is part of the open-plan ground floor layout and separated from the kitchen-diner by a central hallway. Barlow Joinery sourced the lintel above the fireplace, which was built with original bricks from the site, and teamed it with a wood-burner from Stoves Direct. The leather chair is from Furniture Village



Above Natural limestone flooring unifies the ground floor – Mandarin Stone has a similar style. Exposed brick complements the natural materials used throughout the house. The oak dining table and chairs are from Kingsman Interiors. Full-height windows let natural light flood through to the kitchen-dining area

spacious as possible, with plenty of natural light and a big space downstairs where the children could run around – but our plans were turned down.’

They decided to add a garage to the side of the barn instead, which has now been turned into a utility room, freeing up space in the main house. It is also used to store the large tanks for their ground source heat pumps that generate heat for the underfloor heating system and water.

The garage/utility room offers scope to develop the property further, as the couple plan to convert it one day into a family games room, with an extra bedroom above.

Victoria admits that she did have second thoughts about the project and the huge challenge that lay ahead.

‘I was pregnant at the time and wondered if I would be able to cope with it all,’ she remembers, ‘but by the time the building work went ahead, Freddie was six months



DESIGN TIP

You can retain the character of an old building when converting it by opting for an open-plan layout and vaulted ceilings to show off the height, but leave some of the original material, such as brickwork and timbers, exposed

French doors lead outside from the hallway area. The curtains are from Next, while the sideboard is by Neptune Furniture from Belvoir Interiors. Wooden beams in the ceiling create a rustic feel

‘We wanted our new home to be as spacious as possible, with plenty of natural light and sustainable features’

old and, as he was our second child, things felt easier than with Lewis. I spent a lot of time trying to find the perfect materials and furniture. It was challenging but worth it.’

When work began, the barn was full of farming equipment and old junk, which had to be cleared out. Its external lower walls were covered in whitewash, so the bricks had to be repointed and cleaned up.

‘As the barn had been used for farm work we needed to make sure that it wasn’t contaminated,’ says Victoria. ‘We had all sorts of surveys, including engineering reports, bat surveys and contamination reports, which were handled by our architect Clive Booth.’

It didn’t all run smoothly as the couple

experienced delays to their build project, which was just as well that they rented out a house during the work and stayed part of the time with Victoria’s parents.

‘We had to wait for the energy company to reposition a cable serving the electrical equipment, which took months,’ Victoria remembers. ‘When we were underpinning the barn, the end gable collapsed and took three weeks to repair as we had to allow for it to settle before rebuilding it.’

The couple wanted their new home to include an element of sustainability. With this in mind, they had a rainwater harvesting system fitted, which collects water from the roof and serves the two upstairs cloakrooms, as well as an outside

tap for watering plants. A Klargester Biotec sewage treatment system was also installed. Fitting the ground source heat pumps and underfloor heating was a major job for the builders and plumbers.

‘Thankfully, we had hired excellent fitters,’ says Victoria. ‘It’s good to know that all our heating energy comes from beneath our own land.’

While the build was progressing, Victoria planned the interior schemes. She wanted a look that was contemporary yet timeless, with rustic influences so it would work well within the rural environment.

On the ground floor, an open-plan kitchen-diner with cream-painted units leads through to a stylish yet simple living ▶

PRACTICAL TIP

Barn conversions are zero rated for VAT, reducing the cost of labour and materials by 20%. Builders charge the reduced rate of 5% which you claim back from HMRC on completion, plus any standard VAT paid on materials you bought



'I wanted a contemporary yet timeless look, with rustic influences so it would work within the rural environment'

area. The units and window frames were painted a shade of cream to reflect the light and ensure that the attractive interior brickwork stood out.

'Our kitchen table is the hub of the house and the kids play and eat here,' says Victoria. 'We wanted a practical space, so we've added storage boxes in the living area, with plenty of floor space for the boys to run around and play.'

The couple had planned to lay oak flooring, but decided against the idea as

they were concerned that the underfloor heating might warp it. Victoria wanted flooring that didn't look too uniform and which would be practical for young children and easy to clean.

'Flagstones would have been lovely, but probably too thick for us to appreciate the underfloor heating beneath,' Victoria explains. 'Instead, we opted for natural limestone in a mix of warm green, orange, brown and gold shades, which have their own natural stains so it's perfect.'

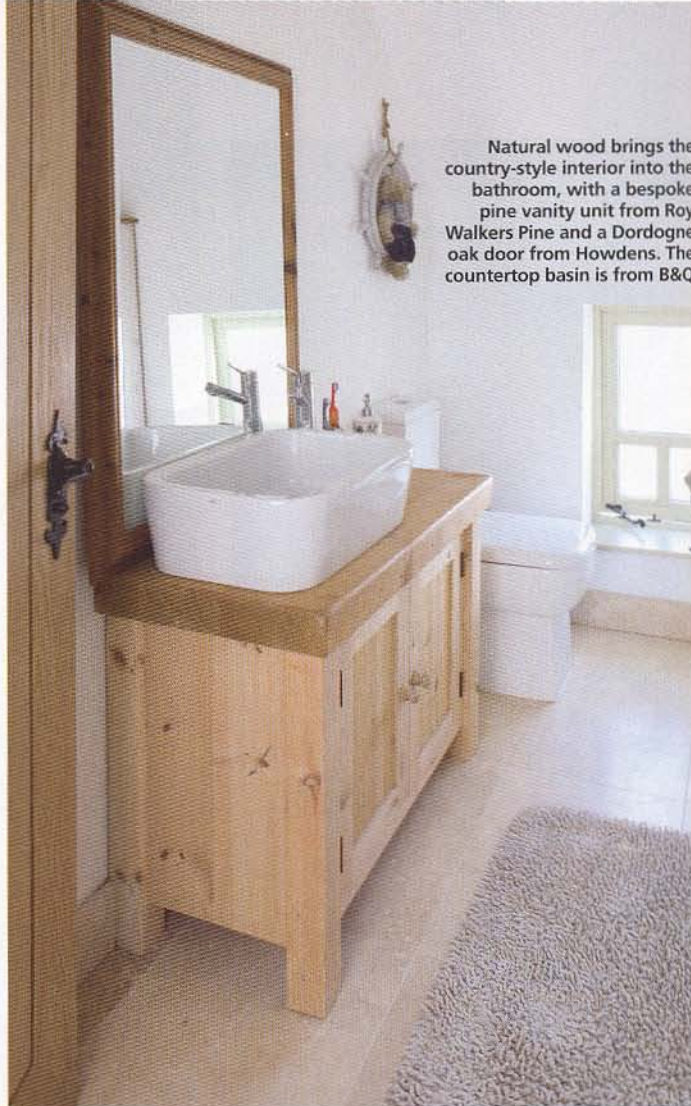
'We love the underfloor heating,' she adds. 'It can get very cold living on a farm surrounded by lots of open land, but when we come home the house is warm and there is no need for slippers.'

In the living area, their flatscreen TV has been positioned subtly, so that it doesn't act as a major focal point whenever they walk into the room.

'Our build project manager suggested putting it on the wall opposite the fireplace, which was a great suggestion,' says Victoria,



The neutral palette is continued in the family bathroom, with floor and wall tiles from Topps Tiles and a bath from Amco. The couple have owned the distressed white cupboard for years – for similar, try Chic Shack



Natural wood brings the country-style interior into the bathroom, with a bespoke pine vanity unit from Roy Walkers Pine and a Dordogne oak door from Howdens. The countertop basin is from B&C

'It's great to know that our heat energy comes from the ground source heat pumps beneath our own land'

it has completely dried out. We'll probably have to redo them, because now that the oak has dried out it has shrunk. Oak needs to be left in a warm environment for several months before it is fitted.'

Victoria is thrilled with their barn conversion, but relieved that the build project is now over.

'I can't believe we went through all that upheaval,' she admits. 'People ask me if I'd ever do it again, and I say probably not – if you make wrong decisions, you have to live with them or start all over again.'

There are plenty of plus points though. 'It's great to have my family living so near – my parents' cottage is only 50 metres away. We've even earmarked that second derelict barn for my brother, who hopes to convert it and move here soon. We can give him lots of advice.'

CONTACTS

Architect: Clive Booth 01636 678517

Construction: Pines Construction
01909 474540 Pinesconstruction.co.uk

Right Victoria bought the bunk bed in Freddie's room from eBay. The décor has been kept simple, with walls painted in a shade of white, plus painted cream shutters that were fitted and supplied by Bruce Gillingham

