



# RUSTIC SPLENDOUR

Making the most of big, bold spaces in a converted Cotswold barn

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**O**ld barns are to the country what lofts and warehouses are to the town: big, beautiful, rugged spaces rescued from oblivion. However, this deliverance can occur at the expense of a building's dignity and looks, for although they say that you can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear it seems all too possible to do the reverse.

Ideally, perhaps, you should not alter the exterior of your ancient dwelling, but then you would have to be prepared to live in a shadowy, twilight world, peeping out wistfully through the cracks in your vast, barn doors at the arcadian splendours spread out all

*ABOVE* On the kitchen sofa, the family lurcher adopts a relaxed pose. *LEFT* A view from across the fields. *OPPOSITE* The central hall, with Derek Elliott's magnificent oak staircase and gallery. The chandelier is from Global Village







ABOVE The chimneypiece in the hall, like the one in the sitting room, was specially commissioned from Farmington Stone, Northleach. The round table in the foreground is covered in Pierre Frey's 'Pondicherry' and the sofa by the fire in Percheron's 'Prince Noir'. The table beside it is covered in a gold chenille from Tutley & Marr, who also supplied the damask for the yellow wing chair. The curtains are in Lelièvre's 'Damas Verona', colour 'Rubis'

around you. No, a better solution would be to employ an expert with a light and sensitive touch to effect a few necessary changes. Praised in Pevsner for its great columbarium, gabled transepts and lantern, the marvellous eighteenth-century, Cotswold stone barn we show here is, in its new finery, a splendid example of what can be achieved.

When the interior designer Henrietta Holroyd was first given her brief, the basic conversion work had already been done. However, the barn had been designed as a weekend retreat and as such was handsome but a little too minimalist for the new owners' tastes. With its original doors and a simple

ladder leading to the upper level, it was also somewhat too dark and draughty for them to live in full-time.

As a result the architect Peter Yiangou was commissioned to reorganize virtually the whole of the barn's huge interior. He opted for an Arts and Crafts approach, employing a wealth of superb oak joinery by Derek Elliott to divide the core of the main structure, which is some ninety feet in length, into a series of harmonious, interrelated spaces, or rooms, which are just separate enough from each other to give privacy, comfort and warmth.

Entering the central hall, you have to your right a pretty, blue and white kitchen with



lined beams; a big, shiny blue Aga; oak kitchen cabinets; and a collection of china dogs, jugs, teapots and other delights. To the left are a sitting room and a studio or garden room. The beams in the studio – as in various other parts of the barn – have also been lined, and this has proved to be a most effective way of retaining them in all their glory while preventing them from becoming too oppressive. Leading off the kitchen, a long, low former cart shed accommodates two bedrooms, each with a bathroom attached.

There is a tremendous feeling of quiet and serenity in the stone-flagged 'great hall', as I am tempted to call it, with its rush matting,

high, vaulted roof and the magnificent oak staircase, which leads to a gallery supported on massive beams and to two further bedrooms and bathrooms. You almost imagine that you can hear ghostly doves cooing somewhere high above. Light pours through a glazed screen framed in heavy, rough, green oak which, outside, is well recessed beneath the great pigeon loft so as to give the generous shadow line Peter Yiangou deems so essential to the successful installation of new windows and doors. The screen opens out on to a courtyard graced by a round pond and a parterre. This, to the new owners' delight, was already there when they arrived.

ABOVE The sitting room's star-spangled ceiling was painted by Tanya Backhouse and Toby Hill. Lelièvre's 'Velours Gascoigne' covers the sofa; the buttoned chair is in 'Peony Twist' by Bennison Fabrics. The needlepoint carpet is from Faghan. Armchairs are in Hodson Mckenzie's 'Willow' chenille and 'Sage' woven stripe. Aubusson cushions and a chair and a stool in antique needlepoint complete the scene





ABOVE A sunlit bedroom has limed beams. The antique French bed is from Judy Greenwood, SW6. RIGHT The studio, where the mistress of the house, an artist, works on botanical paintings. Her Victorian paintbox sits on an oak table by Derek Elliott. OPPOSITE The pigeon loft has a glazed screen recessed beneath it



In choosing the decorations Henrietta Holroyd took into account her clients' love of all things Florentine, especially the small Palazzo Davanzati. The sitting-room tucked between the hall and the studio has family crests and other motifs emblazoned on its beams, and gold-leaf stars on a midnight-blue ceiling. The walls in this area have been plastered and painted a subtle shade of buff, a "soft" counterpoint to the hard original stone on either side. This alternation between stone and plaster, hard and soft, recurs throughout the barn to avoid giving the impression of too much weight and uniformity.

But, of course, it is the mellow, honey-coloured stone which cannot help but be the star of this performance, and against it the rich crimsons and greens and golds of the fabrics, the gentle, intricate weaves and patterns of needlepoint rugs, old tapestry cushions, chairs and stools, look as if they have been there for ever □

