

THE COUNTRY MAGAZINE
EXMOOR

Interiors

Almost a year ago to the day, we packed our bags and moved our lives from London to the Somerset coast. We'd stumbled across the little town of Watchet during a hunt for possible B&B accommodation for our wedding at nearby St Audries three years previously.

The sun was shining, bunting was fluttering in the breeze and steam trains were pulling in and out of Watchet's small and perfectly restored station. It was love at first sight.

We bought a second home on Swain Street at that time and when the next-door bric-à-brac shop came onto the market as well a year later, we saw an opportunity to finally jump ship from our hectic lives working in the media in London and embark on a truly life-changing adventure.

By the time we arrived permanently in Watchet our family had grown, with the arrival of our son Archie, and this had only served to further confirm our belief in what we were planning: to convert the shop into a boutique B&B and create a stylistically different overnight offering for the area.

We worked closely with our architect to create four suites and a guest living/dining area from the interior of the building, retaining the original Victorian shop front and as much of the exterior character as possible. We had an idea of the look and feel that we wanted and finalised this by

piecing together an extensive 'look book' - compiled from two years of researched and saved images.

"Stripping out the building led to rubble and then more rubble before the original features could begin to be restored - and in some cases revealed; among the secrets which the building threw up was a seventeenth-century well in the kitchen!"

We wanted a contemporary, rustic look with a high end, luxe design edge to it. No traditional florals, where possible natural finishes and materials, a simple, crisp, colour palette and, as we've both worked for years in design, tremendous attention to detail. We'd both travelled extensively with our jobs and stayed in some great and not-so-great hotels, so we wanted to create somewhere we'd want to stay in ourselves.

Building work ran for longer than expected, with a large team of builders on site every day. Having originally estimated four months, construction time nearly doubled, with the B&B finally opening in mid-August 2012. Along the way, the building threw up a few surprises, not least a seventeenth-century well in the kitchen! And there was an extraordinary amount of rubble, with 40 tonnes needing to be removed from the ground floor alone!

We were lucky as we had some real craftsmen in the team and they shared our passion for achieving an amazing level of finish.

The rooms are luxurious but uncluttered - nothing is fussy. This applies throughout, from the choice of artwork - wall-sized murals of details from Georgian paintings - to the most simple, beautifully designed slipper baths we could source. Quality was hugely important to us and we wanted that to be present in everything we chose for the interior. We hope that our future guests get as much out of our new-found paradise as we have.

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Swain House Interiors
Boutique B&B
WORDS by Jason & Annie Robinson



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