

A stunning viewpoint

It was meant to be a 'fixer-upper' seaside holiday home but became something far more spectacular. **CHRISSEY HARRIS** visits a modern marvel on the South Devon coast

PHOTOS: Steve Haywood



Andy and Camilla Clark watched a pod of about 40 dolphins go past their front window the other day. That's the kind of reward you get for putting in the hard yards and creating a beautiful home in a stunning location.

Delphis (the Latin word for dolphin) sits on the clifftop in the village of Stoke Fleming, near Dartmouth. The panoramic sea views in this striking contemporary home blow all the others out of the water. Amazon delivery drivers, postmen, visiting *Devon Life* writers – we all peer through the front door on arrival and gasp.

"Every day, it's amazing; we love it," says Andy. "You just walk in and end up out there," he adds, pointing towards arguably one of the best stretches of coastline and seascape in the country.

And to think all of this might never have happened.

"We had a bit of a nirvana moment," says Camilla, explaining the life-changing events that brought the couple here. "My sister, Alison, sadly died from a very aggressive cancer six years ago. It was such a shock. She was only 54, two years older than me, and she'd always been so healthy. We lived near each other, we holidayed together, our kids were close. It just made you stop and think: what are we doing? Andy was travelling all over the world with work and we hardly saw him. The kids were growing up and you ask – what is life really about?"

Fate intervened during a holiday with friends in Dartmouth January 2018, when Andy and Camilla, who live in Taunton, stumbled across what was then called April Cottage in Stoke Fleming. They arranged a viewing that week. "We walked around and you know when it

ARCHITECTURAL HELP

The couple are also very thankful to architect James Lock. "I knew what I wanted from the design," says Camilla, who produced an incredible scale model of the house. "James handled the whole process – and me – brilliantly!" she says, adding how delighted she is with the overall look.

"There have been people who love this and people who hate this, but then I quite like that," says Camilla. roderickjamesarchitects.com

ABOVE: The outlook here has got to be one of the best in Devon.

RIGHT: The couple were clear from the start that they wanted something strikingly different.

FAR RIGHT: Fabulous sea views from the terrace.





'I didn't want a box on a box. We didn't want that 'safe' contemporary look'

FLOOR FLAWS

One of the only hitches with the build was a problem with the cork floor, originally installed downstairs. Unfortunately, it started to 'ripple' and bow in places, shortly after it was put in. It was an upheaval, but the couple decided to start again, replacing the cork with Kahrs engineered flooring. "It's actually much better," says Camilla.



CAREFULLY CONSIDERED MATERIALS

Camilla is prone to different allergies and has had to think carefully about her interiors. Paint brands, sofas, mattresses, bedding, and furniture have been chosen because they are chemical-free.

goes a bit quiet and you both just look at each other for a moment?" says Camilla. "We travelled back to Taunton, talking about it the whole way home."

The pair knew they would have work to do. The house needed some serious renovating, but they'd done up houses before. Plus, Andy, 58, had recently retired from his high-powered job with a global firm. He is an experienced project manager and artist Camilla has a degree in art and architecture. The couple decided to buy April Cottage and turn it into their family's seaside retreat.

"But it needed that much work doing to it, so then it became a bit of a balance," says Andy. "We started to think: do we go the whole way, knock it down and replace it with a new building?"

The couple had also just spent a whole winter in their Stoke Fleming home and loved the location. Could they live here

permanently?

"Then that shifts your whole way of thinking," says Camilla. "It went from being a holiday house to somewhere we could live, long term."

New build it was, then. But not just any old new build. The couple were clear from the start that they wanted something strikingly different.

"What I love about architecture is that nobody loves all the same stuff," says Camilla. "I didn't want a box on a box. We didn't want that 'safe' contemporary look."

The couple worked with architect James Lock, of Roderick James Architects in Totnes, who helped them to create a building that is anything but square.

Bold angles and a combination of zinc, stone, timber and glass make Delphis stand out architecturally but then almost blend back into its surroundings. You can't really see the house from the road and it



GREEN ENVY

Camilla is a big fan of houseplants, placing them in key positions all over the house to bring a touch of green to blank spaces.

TOP LEFT: Camilla and Andy on site during their incredible building project.

ABOVE: Inside, the look is minimal and modern.

RIGHT: Each bedroom has its own style.

FAR RIGHT: Every colour and texture, houseplant and mirror has been carefully chosen.





TOP TEAM

Andy and Camilla say they are so grateful to the brilliant tradesmen who carried out the build. In particular, David Thorogood, of Stoke Fleming-based building firm Cedar Construction. (Call 07837 735847)

doesn't really stand out from the crowd on the cliffside.

Even a passing dolphin would struggle to make it out from a distance, thanks to the soft, natural colours and materials.

Inside, the look is minimal and modern, clean and not cluttered. Every colour and texture, houseplant and mirror has been carefully chosen and put in exactly the right place.

The couple each played to their strengths during this project, with Camilla leading the research into the interior and Andy overseeing the build.

He was on site to manage all aspects of an often complex construction, carried out by a handpicked team of tradesmen. There were Covid restrictions to deal with, plus narrow lanes, huge lorries and giant panes of glass arriving by crane in high winds.

But incredibly, there were no major hitches.

"The key to it was selecting the right people to work with," says Andy, playing down his rather crucial role. "We did keep questioning ourselves about how the house would feel, once it was all done, though," he adds, hinting at the one part of self-building that no amount of planning can predict. "That was always in the back of our minds and you don't really know until the end."

Delphis was always going to feel like home because it is. The couple have already spent loads of time here with their family, including daughters Lara, 27, and Mimi, 24, and are planning to move in permanently at some stage.

A new chapter in a new house – with that outlook. What more could you want?

"It was evolutionary, really," says Andy. "The boundaries just shifted." ♦

camillaclarkart.com

ABOVE: Artist Camilla has her own studio downstairs.



STEPPING DOWN IN STYLE

A white concrete staircase, designed to complement the coastal location, leads down to the three bedrooms and bathrooms on the lower ground floor (the master bedroom is upstairs).

Lara and Mimi's rooms have been given a unique style, using different colours and textures to reflect the sisters' personalities.

"And each bedroom needed to have a relationship with the sea," says Camilla. "That was important."