



# Christmas at the Granary

AN OLD GRAIN STORE NEAR PERRANWELL STATION HAS BEEN RENOVATED INTO A SCENE OF FESTIVE HEAVEN

Words by **Alice Westgate**, photographs by **Sam Morgan Moore**

In Decembers gone by, a handful of sheep would have sheltered from the winter wind amid the tumbledown walls of an old grain-store on a hillside near Perranwell Station. But this year the building will be a good deal cosier, because smallholders Julie and Alan Kemp have just completed the arduous process of renovating the dilapidated building and turning it into the cosiest of holiday cottages. With Christmas now approaching, they are justifiably proud of their achievements as they prepare the pristine interior of The Granary for the first guests of the festive season.

Before the building work began, the structure was so unsound that it may not have even survived another winter. There was no roof, the walls were collapsing, and a rickety metal gate was propped up in place of a doorway. Julie and Alan, however, had a rescue plan in mind and their vision was so clear that nothing – not →







HOMES



even a lengthy battle over planning – could put them off.

Once permission was eventually granted, the Kems did much of the hard graft themselves, along with Paul Roberts, a local builder. Alan, an electrical engineer by trade, used his expertise to organise the power supply and wiring, and to manage the whole project. Julie, who runs a holiday cottage management company, seamlessly turned her hand to roofing, with the help of loyal friends. This task involved drilling two holes in every single slate that needed to be hung on the roof. Later, everyone pitched in to decorate the interior. And when all that was done, Julie made the soft furnishings, from the blinds and curtains to the upholstered headboards.

The materials that were used in the renovation of The Granary were carefully chosen to blend in well with its rural surroundings. The extra stone that was needed to rebuild the walls was painstakingly sourced from the surrounding fields to ensure it was a perfect match, while inside, solid oak was chosen for floors and doors, with all the joinery being done by local carpenter Nigel Gallie. Walls were washed in a rustic, cream-coloured paint, exposed beams were carefully lime-washed, and window-frames stained in a subtle shade of green.

"I wanted the colours of the interior to be the same as the colours outside," says Julie, who devised the layout and

designed the interior herself. "I didn't want anything we added to clash with the rural aspect of the building."

With the building project now behind them, the Kems should, by rights, be awarding themselves some time off. Yet December is traditionally a busy time for both their businesses, so opportunities to rest are rare. For Julie, in particular, the winter holiday sees a huge increase in commitments as

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she oversees the preparation and decoration of the 20 or so houses in her care in time for Christmas, ensuring that everyone's stay runs smoothly.

Yet despite the obvious pressures, Julie still finds plenty of joy in her work at this time of year: "I love getting all the holiday cottages ready for Christmas and can't resist buying extra decorations for them each year. I also love making

things, from wreaths to flower arrangements, and have done so ever since I was a child."

When it comes to dressing the interior of The Granary, her style once again takes its cue from the surrounding landscape: "A property like this gives so much scope for using traditional country-style decorations," she muses. "I love the idea of using natural materials in here such as glass and wood, combined with lots of greenery."

Centre-stage is a traditional Cornish Christmas tree – the top of a holly bush cut from a hedgerow on the farm. Its branches are hung with an array of carefully chosen decorations that are artfully dotted among the red berries, from glass spheres, each containing a flickering tea-light, to glittering antiqued silver baubles.

Elsewhere, windowsills are lined with terracotta pots filled with candles and tied with gingham ribbons; pretty baubles and sprigs of greenery hang from Shaker peg-rails; bunches of fresh rosemary lie beside the bath to provide weary guests with a relaxing herbal soak; and hot-water bottles sit at the foot of each bed, in the rare event that the feature fire and under-floor heating aren't cosy enough.

For the Kems themselves, who live a stone's throw from The Granary, Christmas Day is when the real relaxing can

begin, and celebrations are kept fairly low-key. Alan puts himself in charge of cooking the Christmas dinner: "He does the whole thing, complete with every trimming it's possible to have," laughs Julie. "We usually spend Christmas Day as a family with our son Ben so that we can just chill out and do very little. It's the one day of the year when the phone shouldn't ring. Even so, it sometimes does. Nothing surprises me after 18 years of looking after people on holiday!"

Whoever spends the festive season as Julie and Alan's guests at The Granary is guaranteed a warm welcome and a peaceful, stress-free Cornish Christmas. Just one word of warning though: if faces appear at the window, don't be alarmed. They merely belong to the sheep that huddled here in previous seasons, seemingly rather curious about what has become of their one-time home. 

#### CONTACT DETAILS

► The Granary is available to let all year round. Prices start from £300 per week in low season. Call Julie Kemp on 01872 864952 or visit [www.cornishbarnholidays.co.uk](http://www.cornishbarnholidays.co.uk)