

THE SURF & turf LOOK

The views are stunning, but it's the utility room at Drake House that has CHRISSY HARRIS hooked





A CLIFFTOP GARDEN:

The garden at Drake House was once scrubland and has now been landscaped, while still retaining a wild, seaside feel.

"We were sitting down there yesterday and I suppose it's because the garden is finished but there was a sense of: we've arrived now. It's done," says Clare. "We've got to the stage now where, bar a couple of things, we can come and really relax."



Drake House sits on its clifftop perch, overlooking the beautiful Hope Cove

DRAKE HOUSE has got to have one of the best views in South Devon, overlooking beautiful Hope Cove from its cliff-top perch. And yet, here I am, completely blown away by the utility room.

Lovely appliances! A double shower to wash sandy feet! So much space to dry wet washing!

Owner Clare Geoffreys and I have a moment together where we connect over the merits of such a special space.

"One of the things I was really determined about was a proper utility room," Clare, mum to three boys, says with a knowing look, as she tells me how she helped to design this area of her house.

"So, you come in here and you can be wet and gooey from the beach but it all happens in this room. You can dry off, wash and as soon as you go through that door... fresh and clean before you go in the house."

She laughs at how happy this most practical of set-ups makes her but when you've got a 15, 13 and ten-year-old, it makes perfect sense.

"Boys are great, bless them, they try, but they don't get it," she says, explaining how years of practice have helped her design this family friendly holiday home.

"There's a real sense that you can still live in a lovely space but not feel that you have to be surrounded by wetsuits. On a practical level, that gives me a real kick."

Clare, a teacher, and husband Robin, who works in sales, have thought long and hard about the layout of this former captain's house.

They have worked with a series of architects, an 'amazing' builder, local residents, friends and relatives to drag the 1907-built building into the modern age while still retaining its charm.

The whole place has been turned around to focus on that spectacular view, framed by a modern glass extension.

You cannot help but sit and look at it from the huge kitchen, sitting room, master bedroom, garden – it gets everywhere.

Even the colour scheme – all greens, blues and sandy tones – reflects the great outdoors. Clare calls it her 'surf and turf' look. ▶

This is a holiday home that
lets everyone be together
and then spread out





Locals say the house, with stunning views, was used to rehabilitate wounded soldiers in World War Two

'You have to be so meticulous because nobody is going to look out for the things that matter to you as much as you'

"We had long discussions about surf and turf," says Robin, before adding: "Clare has very good vision with this kind of stuff. Having got hold of the property the idea was that I would take it on and deal with it, but it turned out that Clare was very good at it."

"Oh, you're very sweet to say that," says Clare. "Because I couldn't have done this on my own."

In fact, it was Robin who first spotted Drake House after the family had spent an idyllic summer's day at Hope Cove when their children were small.

"I had a school friend from boarding school and she used to come to the lifeboat cottages around the corner in old Hope," says Clare. "We came for the day and she cooked us lasagne and we spent a lot of time on the beach."

"Our children were absolutely captivated by this place and never forgot the day they had here."

During their stay, Robin had glanced up to the cliff top and half-jokingly said he would like to live in the distinctive house with stunning views, which locals say was used to help rehabilitate wounded World War Two soldiers.

Years later, here they are in their dream bolthole and successful holiday let. Simple, hey?

"It's been quite stressful," says Clare, which might be a slight understatement.

She and Robin have spent hours on the road, often leaving their home near London at 6am to oversee developments in Devon before returning home to their sons aged 15, 13 and ten, and their day jobs.

"You have to be so meticulous because nobody is going to look out for the things that matter to you as much as you," says Clare, later ▶



HOPE COVE:
A FAMOUS
LOCATION:

Clare and Robin love coming to Hope Cove, which was recently used as the location for the BBC drama *The Coroner*.

"There's enough activity but it's very peaceful in the evening," says Clare. "There are a lot of people that are drawn here again and again."



The utility room at Drake House



The colour scheme, all greens, blues and sandy tones, reflects the great outdoors. Clare calls it her 'surf and turf' look

*'Yep. We're back to that utility room.
I can't help it. It's so beautiful'*

admitting that she is a bit of a perfectionist.

"I was going to say picky but yes, perfectionist is good," laughs Robin.

"There were one or two points where we thought that with the number of lights we were going to have would mean there would be aircraft coming in..."

"I knew what I wanted," adds Clare, who says the couple had a pretty good team behind them, including architect Richard Atkinson and builder John Oldrieve.

They all worked together to make sure this house sleeps ten and 'lives ten', a theory at the heart of a holiday home that lets everyone be together and then spread out.

People can eat in the impressive kitchen and dining room and then disappear off to read, hangout in the garden, watch television or head off to the beach – as long as they wash their sandy feet upon re-entry, of course.

Yep. We're back to that utility room. I can't help it. It's so beautiful.

"It seems like a huge extravagance but I was thinking for ten people, you need two showers side by side," says Clare, who has learnt all this after spending time in the house with her children and their friends.

"It's allowing the house to be a place that is surrounded by beautiful countryside, walks, the sea but also function as a proper seaside home." ♦

Drake House is let through Coast & Country Cottages. See coastandcountry.co.uk



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