



# 'We created our dream holiday home'

Fiona and Ian Roper turned a derelict Victorian cottage on the Suffolk coast into a contemporary home from home

❖ For stockist details, turn to page 171

## 60-second tour

**Who lives here** Fiona and Ian Roper and their children Bethan, 11, and Tom, nine. Fiona works in market research and Tom works for a marketing consultancy.

**The home** A three-bed Victorian cottage in Aldeburgh, Suffolk, bought in September 2006 as a second home.

**The look** Coastal chic.  
**Lessons learned** 'Running a renovation project from a distance is extremely difficult!' says Fiona.

**LOWER GROUND FLOOR** Here, there's a kitchen-diner and cloakroom  
**GROUND FLOOR** On this floor, there's a large open-plan living space  
**FIRST FLOOR** Two bedrooms and the main bathroom are located on this floor  
**TOP FLOOR** The attic was converted into a large bedroom with en suite



Bought for  
**£190,000**  
Spent around  
**£110,000**  
Now worth  
**£400,000**

## What the makeover cost

Building & plastering work.....£54,00	Kitchen.....£11,000
Loft conversion.....£25,000	Bathrooms.....£10,000
	Furnishings.....£10,000
	<b>TOTAL.....£110,000</b>



The new decked patio that's off the kitchen at the back of the cottage is one of the family's favourite spots. 'It's a real suntrap and the sea views are fantastic,' says Fiona. When the family comes down from their home in Hertfordshire to spend weekends at the cottage, meals are served outside, weather permitting. Lisa Stickley seat pads, Garden Trading. Table, find similar at B&Q

**The big change**  
Converting the attic and completely renovating the run-down house

The living room, with its modern classic scheme, gives no hint of the cottage's past. 'When we bought the house it was a real mess,' says Fiona. 'Even the children were horrified' Sofas, *IKEA*. Rug, *The Cotswold Company*. Wall lights, *ILVA*. Chest, *Amphill Antiques Emporium*



**RIGHT** The kitchen is on the lower ground floor of the cottage. 'The original kitchen was unusable and was actually up where our dining room is now,' says Fiona. The couple moved it down here as the arched doorway leads out to a decked area that can be used for outdoor dining Pine table, *Amphill Antiques Emporium*. Chairs, find similar at *IKEA*. Blackboard, *Looma Home, Gifts & Flowers*. Cream jug, *Garden Trading*



**T**he beauty of the small coastal resort of Aldeburgh in Suffolk came as a complete surprise to Fiona and Ian Roper when they stumbled upon it two years ago. 'We just thought it was so charming,' says Ian. Discovering that the town was a year-round destination helped persuade the couple, who were thinking about investing in a holiday cottage, to choose this spot. 'It's a two-hour drive from our home in Hertfordshire, so we knew it would be perfect for weekend breaks for us and the children,' says Fiona. **What was the cottage like when you first bought it?**

**ABOVE** Fiona and Ian decided to knock two rooms into one to create a big living space on the ground floor of the four-storey cottage. Fiona's gone for a subtle seaside scheme with a pebble colour on the walls, blue-striped cushions and coastal pictures Walls painted in *Muted Stone, Dulux*. Cushions, *Snape Maltings*. Wicker chairs, *ILVA*. Pictures, *IKEA*

It was dreadful! The bathroom and kitchen were unusable and the previous owner was cat mad, so it was in a state. But we're in the perfect location and can be on the beach with the kids or browsing in the shops in minutes. **So fixing it was a big job?** Yes, and even though Ian and I have watched enough homes programmes to know that you →

**RIGHT** As Fiona and Ian bought the cottage not only as a seaside retreat for the family, but also to rent out, they needed more than one bathroom. First they gave the existing bathroom (shown) a complete revamp with a calming neutral scheme and then added two more bathrooms – an en suite in the converted attic and a cloakroom off the kitchen

*Suite, Bathstore. Manhattan Combi Bone tiles, AG Ceramics. Glass shelves and pictures, IKEA*



**ABOVE** The kids sleep in here when the family come down at the weekend. They love the bunk beds, says Ian

*Bunk beds, Tesco. Red throws, find similar at Next. Bunting, find similar at The White Company*

should go into a project with your spec all sorted first, we didn't! We had planned to make a third bedroom out of the original kitchen, which is where the dining area of the living room is now, but then we decided to convert the attic into a third bedroom with en suite, and put the kitchen and a cloakroom in the basement so the ground floor could be one big open living space.

**How did you manage all the building work when you were living two hours away?**

It was very stressful. When we've run projects at home they've gone brilliantly but, because the cottage is a two-hour drive away, we couldn't keep on top of it. There was the problem of wanting to be in control, but being mindful of not calling the builder every single day to check up on things – it was a delicate balance.

**Did you take on any of the work yourself?**

Yes. We all had to muck in at the end when we ran out of money – there were eight of us in the cottage at one point trying to finish it off in time for the first →

Designed to stand the test of time, the front bedroom on the first floor is furnished with white-painted furniture and nautical blue checks and stripes

*Bed and bedside tables, Wood 'n' Matter. Lamps, ILVA. Checked blanket, Chandlers. Cushion fabric, IKEA*



rental booking. Ian's brother was excellent – he gave up his summer holiday to help us. Because he's a joiner, he was able to help Ian finish installing the kitchen and did the new skirting and architrave. **What do you love most about the cottage now?**

It's a close call between the attic bedroom and the kitchen. It's glorious waking up in the top bedroom when the sun's pouring through the windows. You can hear the waves and the seagulls, and it takes your breath away. In the mornings, the sun also shines through the arched windows in the kitchen and it's a lovely place to start the day, too. We're just all so proud of what we've done. ❖



'It's glorious waking up in the attic bedroom when the sun is pouring through the windows and you can hear the waves and seagulls,' says Fiona. 'But we did have to have a special bed made so it would fit under the eaves' Bed, Bagpress. Throw, Habitat



ABOVE The family's black Labradors – Charlie and Daisy – wait patiently at the front gate to head down to the beach, which is just a short walk away. The cottage can be rented when the family's not staying (01728 638962; www.bestofsuffolk.co.uk)

See more inspiring house makeovers at [www.idealhome.co.uk/houses](http://www.idealhome.co.uk/houses)



From the window seat in the stairwell leading to the kitchen, there's a great view of the deck area and the sea beyond

FEATURE CAMILLA SHARMAN STYLING JENNIFER MORGAN PHOTOGRAPHS NIKKI CRISP, ALAMY

FEATURE CLARE STEEL PHOTOGRAPHS NIKKI CRISP



£795

Cuba three-seater leather sofa in Brown (H67cm x W203cm x D89cm), Dwell



£14.99

Egmont wall light, Argos



from £60

Spring Mist cushion in Blue, John Lewis

£18



£59

Sisal rug, (L170cm x W120cm), The Cotswold Company



Fiona's living room  
Cool neutrals and warm textures



£249

Meral armchair (H76cm x W79cm x D77cm), The Pier

From left: East Breeze at Quansoo (H54cm x W54cm), £60; Dune Fence (H60cm x W60cm), £70; both Think Pictures

## Get Fiona's look

❖ For stockist details, turn to page 171



£35

Chindi Juliet rug in Blue (W70cm x L160cm), Lily Blue



£199

Montreal double bed frame (H116cm x W150cm x L200cm), mattress not included, Homebase

Fiona's guest room  
A simple seaside scheme



£30

Ellis lamp, Laura Ashley

£14

Wooden model liner, The Beach Hut



£70 each

Johnson's blankets, Chandlers



Wiltshire bedside chest (H66cm x W40cm x D40cm), The Cotswold Company

£399 for two