

## Stylish homes on sale now

### The Downes, North Devon £1.75 million



Looking for a grand home? This property near Bideford comes with 120 acres of glorious countryside. Indoors is pretty special too, with all sorts of character features in the elegant Georgian rooms.  
**Agents:** Savills, Exeter, 01392 455755, www.savills.co.uk

### Stone Farm Cottage, Dartmoor £625,000



This charming property near Christow comes with chic decor and this luxury kitchen. It has five bedrooms, five acres of land and the old dairy has been converted into an attractive one-bedroom annexe.  
**Agents:** Strutt & Parker, Exeter, 01392 215631, www.struttandparker.com

### Kelladean House, North Devon £465,000



Kelladean House is a Grade II listed property that's both cosy and full of period details such as beams, original fireplaces and Georgian windows. It is set in more than seven acres of land.  
**Agents:** Stags, Barnstaple, 01271 322833, www.stags.co.uk

# From little acorns to lovely homes

## Caroline Doughty reveals the joy of oak-framed buildings

As the Westcountry gears up for another tourist season and its annual invasion of visitors, there will be plenty among them who indulge in an annual fantasy of what it would be to live here year-round. Life could be like one long holiday...

And so it has been described by one happy customer of Devon-based homes company, Carpenter Oak. The company, which has been going for more than 20 years, is based just outside Totnes in the South Hams. Led by director Stuart Voaden, Carpenter Oak builds structural timber framed buildings – everything from garden cabins, extensions and 'micro homes' to houses and large public buildings.

And business has been so good in Devon that the company decided to open a new production yard in Lelant, West Cornwall, last month. Initially employing two full-time structural carpenters and a frame designer based in Falmouth, Stuart Voaden says it is conceivable that staff numbers could double in the first year.

"We are already looking for a third carpenter and we will probably need another before too long. We'd like to find someone local who is interested in learning these age-old skills and the craft of structural framing."

Carpenter Oak Cornwall's first man in is Tim Simpson, 34, who grew up in Carbis Bay and had been working at the company's Devon yard for seven years. He and partner Katie, together with their children, Holly and Jack, were keen to move back to Cornwall to be nearer Tim's family. Now settled back in St Ives, Tim says the move is, "Everything I could have imagined. I'm so proud to be coming back here with these skills, and introducing them to

people who didn't even know timber framing existed. I'm really excited at the prospect of helping create our beautiful buildings here in Cornwall."

And he's not just surrounded by family, but by old friends too. Fellow staffer Ben Trevorror, 35, grew up in Zennor. He is a year older than Tim, attended the same school and played for the same rugby club. Ben left for

'We believe our designs genuinely enhance the beauty of this special area we live in'

Cardiff University and then years of travelling followed while he played semi-professional rugby. Now he and wife Steph, a Canadian teacher, have two children and are thrilled to be back in the South West.

"My dad was a fisherman fishing out of St Ives – we go back a long way in Cornwall," says Ben. "I knew what a great place this is to grow up and I wanted it for my boys so we decided it was time to come back," said Ben, clearly enjoying the good life as we



Carpenter Oak's structural timber-framed buildings include everything from extensions 'micro homes' and a music studio, below, to houses and large public buildings

met on Carbis Bay beach and drank coffee while the boys dug holes in the sand. Ollie will start school in Carbis Bay in September and he and his little brother Jasper go to nursery in St Ives.

Ben had been working as a carpenter in Canada but is a newcomer to traditional mortice and tenon joinery as used by Carpenter Oak. "Tim's a great teacher but it's going to be a steep learning curve for me," he says.

And he won't necessarily be working just with oak. Carpenter Oak also use Douglas fir with stainless steel bracing for a contemporary feel and a lighter aesthetic than a traditional



barn-style oak frame. "We know that for people planning to build from scratch, or adding an extension to an existing property, getting planning permission can be tricky and time consuming," says Stuart.

"The quality of our frames, the natural materials we use and the traditional building methods we employ do make it easier to navigate the planning process. We believe our designs genuinely enhance the beauty of this special area we live in."

What is more, today's wooden-

framed buildings can be seamlessly integrated with the most modern energy-efficient technology, from passive solar heating technology to heat transfer methods – so you could build yourself a home that costs nothing to heat.

The only drawback to these beautiful buildings is that your guests may never want to leave. So be warned – if you invite your friends and family to stay in one, they may find it hard to go home.

For more details visit [www.carpenteroak.com](http://www.carpenteroak.com)

## Home truths

by Paula Nicholls  
Interior design expert



I'm all out of sorts. I've lost a day. I think it was Monday or was it Sunday? I'm not good with all these bank holidays – we've only just had Easter, now there are another two on their way.

In fact, I'm boringly into routine, considering I work as a creative type. Get up 7.15am. Feed cats. Make pot of coffee. Watch Everybody Loves Raymond, think "seen this" and laugh anyway. Do ablutions. Go up to office to book in parcel carriers, print labels and then off to the warehouse. Take dog for a walk.

Same the next day. Then on Saturday, I lie in genteel languor waiting for the results of the previous night's libations to dissipate and read any newspapers I can lay my trembling hands on. Sunday get up, walk the dog and it is all pretty similar to weekdays, with less work and more papers. It's hell on the cutting edge of design.

Gone are the days of careless abandon, waking late, going out two nights in a row – perish the thought! So when I get a couple of extra days of unemployment I'm off kilter. But I do find that having a good walk or a cream tea can make amends. Or wine. Wine can take the edge off the chaos that my internal calendar is now experiencing.

What's more, we are frighteningly busy at the moment. Moving house. Moving the business. Big orders coming in and a week's work in London. At first I was afraid (I was petrified). Then I thought "Well, organise yourself girl. You can do it." So I bought folders of varied hue and I am: Folder Women.

Now, at any point, I can be asked: "Where will you be at 9am next Thursday?" I refer to my blue folder and find I will be picking up keys to new office and warehouse. We have a folder for moving house. A folder for my son to go to university. A folder for the pets. It's brilliant, but beware, once you start you can't stop, I'm going to prepare a folder for my folders and Ryman's are doing three for two at the moment so there could be trouble ahead.

As mentioned in previous articles, I love my modern technology, and

am so delighted to be reunited with my beloved iPad with its twinkly lights and sleek slimmness. But you can't beat a good old-fashioned folder: I knew a girl whose father had a folder on all his family's health. Even when they had left home he would regularly call them for an update on their ailments. His reasoning that in the event of sudden ill health he could supply the doctors with full details of their medical history. He had a whole separate folder dedicated to his nose, sinus problems, enlarged pores and potential melanomas. He died of old age, well into his 90s and it was definitely not nose-related.

I love my iPad with its twinkly lights... But you can't beat a good old-fashioned folder

As I finish writing this, we've just been given a date for the house move. Quick as a flash it's in my diary and dates folder with a cross-reference to the house moving folder. Ultimately, my iPad is not man enough for this task. Technology, for me, is for watching Frasier reruns and finding videos of kittens and puppies doing cute things. Same for everyone, probably.

Paula Nicholls runs Betty Boyns, an interiors and soft furnishings company, in her home village of Newlyn, West Cornwall. For more details call 08450 219550 or visit [www.bettyboyns.co.uk](http://www.bettyboyns.co.uk)

