



EASY TO LOG IN: The original fireplace now boasts a wood burner. The chair is by Ercol and the cushion is made from vintage fabric.

Wish you were here?

RURAL AND RETRO: This farmhouse near Hebden Bridge is the perfect holiday let for design and literary enthusiasts. **Sharon Dale** reports. Pictures by **Jonathan Gawthorpe**.

BUYERS are easily seduced by beautiful views but the outlook from Lesley Jackson's window has special significance. It features in *Return to Elmet*, the collaboration between poet Ted Hughes and photographer Fay Godwin. The 1979 book of poems and pictures is based on an area radiating out from Heptonstall to Haworth and Halifax.

Lesley was lucky enough to hear Hughes recite his poetry when she was on a writing course at the Arvon Foundation, based at nearby Lumb Bank. The experience had a profound effect.

"It was incredible and one of those moments you never forget. When I came to see this house and saw the view from the window, I knew it was the same as the cover photograph on *Return to Elmet*, which is my favourite book," she says.

Lesley moved to the semi-detached farmhouse 17 years ago and recently bought the other half, which was in need of full renovation. The project has taken two years and the result is a Grade-II listed holiday let that is perfect for design and literary enthusiasts.

There is a copy of *Return to Elmet* by a window seat in the sitting room so guests can read while reflecting on the landscape that inspired the words.

There are also works by the Brontës and, of course, by Sylvia Plath. Another shelf is devoted to Lesley's own books. She is a writer and eminent design historian who has written on everything from Ercol to Robin and Lucienne Day. A former museum curator, she is an authority on 1950s and 60s design, and the newly-renovated interior reflects her passion for the era.

It is a surprise, as it's so far removed from



NEW LEASE OF LIFE: Top, Elmet Farmhouse is now fully restored; above, the stunning views from the property; left, Hannah Nunn wallpaper and green lino in the bathroom; right, the entrance hall is painted in soft Farrow & Ball and the dark space is lifted with lime green lino.

the country style decor you'd expect to find in an 18th century farmhouse. Instead, it is full of mid-century modern finds, both decorative and practical. All the crockery, cutlery and glasses are original retro and include her beloved Midwinter pottery. The kitchen window sill is also home to some splendid glassware from the era.

"Curating exhibitions and writing books meant that I got to know the stories and the people behind the designs. It gives everything a personal dimension," says Lesley.

These are the finishing touches that have helped bring the house back to life. The property, which Lesley has renamed Elmet Farmhouse, was last renovated in the 1950s and had lain empty with a leaking roof before she bought it.

The building work began with a re-roof, followed by rewiring and plumbing, new windows, doors and central heating.

Stripping the building back also provided a chance to pack it full of insulation and to use lime plaster, which allows the house to breathe. Ripping out the partitions and the plasterboard uncovered some of features that Lesley feared had been lost.

"The builder was great. He specialises in traditional buildings. He said that we'd find the original fireplace behind the 1950s one and we did," she says.

It is now the focal point of the sitting room and boasts a cosy wood burner. The

“The builder said we'd find the original fireplace behind the 1950s one and we did.”

window seats and the stone mullions were also discovered and restored.

The build also created a chance to change what was a corridor, storage room and back kitchen beyond into a large dining kitchen and separate utility room with birch kitchen units from Ikea. Upstairs, there is a house bathroom and two bedrooms on the first floor and a loft bedroom and bathroom on the second.

The flooring is a mix of grey wool carpet and zesty lime green linoleum. Lesley loves lino, and believes it is far superior to vinyl flooring.

"It's an amazing material, all natural made from cork and linseed oil. It is soft to touch but incredibly hard wearing. I have it my own kitchen next door and it's as good now as it was when it went down 16 years ago. Luckily I know an old-established firm that specialises in it," she says.

Walls are decorated with cycle print

wallpaper by Rasch and hangings from Lesley's impressive collection of vintage fabric. "I got interested in the fabric after writing *The New Look: Design in 1950s* to accompany an exhibition in 1991. No-one used the terms vintage and retro then and there wasn't a lot of interest in it so I managed to collect quite a bit. It is a lot harder to find these days."

The sitting room curtains, made by her friend Liz Broadley, are from one of her best buys, a full bolt of 1960s cloth created by Edinburgh Weavers. The autumnal shades complement the walls, which are painted in Farrow & Ball's Sudbury Yellow. "I love Farrow & Ball the colours for the depth, softness and durability," says Lesley.

Much of the furniture is from Nottingham-based Danish Homestore and is a mix of beech, teak and light oak. It is mostly





REST EASY: Right, the bedding is from Ikea and the pendant light from B&Q; above, one of the three bedrooms complete with a chair that belonged to Lesley's mother; left, the sideboard in the sitting room is from the Danish Homestore and the lamp by Hannah Nunn; opposite below, lamp by Hannah Nunn and wallpaper by Rasch.



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mid-century and includes a sideboard from Sweden. The chair next to the fire is Ercol, which goes well with the new Poang chairs from Ikea. The superstore is also Lesley's first port of call for new fabric. "It is great for anyone who loves textiles. Ikea uses the top Scandinavian designer to create its fabrics," says Lesley, who also paid great attention to the lighting.

Alongside inexpensive pendant lights from B&Q and Homebase, are paper cut lamps by Hebden Bridge designer Hannah Nunn. Hannah, who owns the Radiance store in Hebden, also designed the wallpaper in the loft bathroom.

"I love Hannah's lamps. When you switch them on you get a buzz because the exquisite design is illuminated," says Lesley. "They have cow parsley, dandelions and alliums on them, which mirror what is outside in the garden and the fields. I suppose it is all about the view again."



LESLEY'S USEFUL CONTACTS

- Elmet Farmhouse, Elmet Farmhouse, near Hebden Bridge, sleeps six, telephone 07910 075952, www.elmetfarmhouse.co.uk, enquiries@elmetfarmhouse.co.uk
- Builder: Steven Barker, Hebden Bridge, tel: 07966 201804
- Windows, doors and joinery: Yorkshire Pine, Sowerby Bridge, tel: 01422 834487, www.yorkshirekitchensandfurniture.co.uk
- JD Plasterers, Hebden Bridge, www.jdplasterers.co.uk
- Plumbing and central heating: Derek

- Senior, Hebden Bridge, tel: 07802 662760
- Electrician: MJ Dean, Hebden Bridge, tel: 07912 859115
- Lighting and wallpaper: Hannah Nunn, Radiance shop, Hebden Bridge, www.radiancelighting.co.uk, www.hannahnunn.co.uk
- Linoleum and carpet: John Abbott Flooring, Oldham, tel. 0161 624 8246, www.johnabbottflooring.co.uk
- Vintage Scandinavian furniture: Danish Homestore, Nottingham, www.danish-homestore.com

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