

style



Above: 'Charmed', the Llewelyn-Bowen boutique. Top: the fireplace in the LLB living room. Opposite: eclectic china, a Laurence-designed iron lamp, and a handmade LLB cushion to keep Jackie comforted when the man himself is away filming!

designer pad

Where do you go for wholesome family hols when you're a TV holiday show presenter and you've been pretty much everywhere? The answer is a tiny Cornish village. **Laurence and Jackie Llewelyn-Bowen** give WM an exclusive look inside their holiday home Words: Naomi Snelling Pictures: Neil Bennett



“ WHEN WE BOUGHT THE HOUSE SIX YEARS AGO, I WENT BACK TO LONDON LEAVING JACKIE HERE FOR A WEEK. WHEN I CAME BACK, SHE'D COMPLETELY GUTTED EVERYTHING! ”

Something has happened to a tiny fishing village called Port Isaac in north Cornwall – it's been Llewelyn-Bowen-ised. Tucked right next to the pub on the harbour's edge is a stone-built house – once a net loft where local fishermen hauled their nets. Now it's a second home from home for the flamboyant design duo and their entourage.

Opera is blasting away beautifully when Jackie (that's Mrs Llewelyn-Bowen) shows us inside, but most of the din comes from a gaggle of girls. The couple's two daughters, Cecile, 11, and Hermione, 8, and an assortment of friends and spaniels are careering around and squawking like noisy seagulls. Hermione's rollerblade trainers are the star of the show.

“We're slowly morphing into the Osbornes,” says Jackie, completely unperturbed, as she serenely shows us the tiny lounge. “Pass the crackers round girls, don't just sit there like idle cows,” says Laurence. “No, DON'T throw prawn crackers out of the window!”

“Still, it could be worse, the cat fell out of the roof window last summer, and nearly landed on some poor lady's head”, he tells WM. “We were in the middle of a photo shoot for the lovely OK magazine and we were all being terribly well behaved until that point!” LLB says.

With its tiny old-style windows and staggering sea views, it's no wonder Jackie calls their little home ‘my Elizabethan ship’.

“I think she has Johnny Depp fantasies,” says Laurence. “I'd be very unhappy about our Elizabethan ship being moored too far away from the pub.” He certainly doesn't have to go far, as their house is attached to a gorgeous 15th-century building which is now a pub. This is where the family go for lunch most days – lobster and chips all round.

With its tiny rooms, and simple seaside feel, this is a world removed from the couple's main home in London's Greenwich.



“When we first moved into that house, for the first few months we lived like 70s rock stars in ballroom-sized rooms, with just one seat in the middle and a lamp. Now, five years later, you literally can't walk in a straight line because it's all little tables and knick-knacks and stuff like that,” says Jackie. “It's more like Acorn Antiques with a slight Vivienne Westwood edge to it perhaps!” corrects Laurence.

Getting their second home up to scratch was an expensive three-year process. “It was the pits when we moved in. It had been holiday let for years and years and every time a bit of damp came through they just put another layer of plasterboard over it,” says Jackie. On the top floor she points out the bathroom. “The floor level was all seasick. Everybody always thought they were drunk because they were peeing all over the place,” she laughs.

When it came to decorating and revamping their holiday home, Jackie took the lead. Did Laurence just sit back and let it happen? “Yes ... because I had no choice!” he says.

“We bought it six years ago and I went back to London with the girls leaving Jackie here for a week. I assumed we'd be able to live with it as it was for a while and move things around gradually. When I came back at the end of the week with the children, she had completely gutted everything!”

“I had my builder friend who was supervising my activities, he was very good,” says Jackie. “Of course he was, he could see pound



signs hanging in the air!” retorts Laurence.

LLB certainly had a lot to do with the house, but Jackie took the lead – choosing the carpet colour ‘which is the best carpet colour in the world – slate grey’. The pale blue paint which has been used on most of the walls was a Laurence touch.

Jackie gave WM the grand tour. Upstairs, the couple’s bedroom resembles a tiny cabin, although apparently it’s quite big for Cornwall. The plaster, like the walls, looks like it has been there for centuries but it’s a clever illusion created by careful restoration. Painted in magnolia, with coral transfers, this was a Laurence design which he now hates.

“He wants to redesign this bedroom now, and paint it this coral colour which could look quite nice,” says Jackie. The cushion on the bed has a digital print of the couple’s two spaniels and Laurence, (who calls it a picture of the three tenors!). “It’s for when I’m on my own and feeling homesick and Laurence isn’t with me. He had it made up because I’m down here quite regularly on my own now, as I’ve opened my own boutique, called Charmed, just down the street” says Jackie.

On the chest of drawers are two hairpieces, one blonde one brunette – his and hers?! “This is my second one for when I’m really glamorous. I think that’s Hermione’s. Laurence is the only one in the family who doesn’t need a hairpiece, he has girly hair!” Jackie laughs.

Back downstairs, the lounge, with its olde worlde beamed ceiling, looks totally authentic but it has taken a lot of work to achieve. “It was much lower when we moved in, you’d have a serrated head half the time. We took two-and-a-half tonnes of rubble out of the ceiling and it was a major job. We took all the plasterboard off, got back to the stone and then had to replaster. So although it looks ancient, and that’s how it’s supposed to look, in fact it wasn’t. What was here was terrible.

“Laurence mixed up this paint which is emulsion eggshell with Artex, and that’s what we used on the ceiling”, Jackie says.

The sun is streaming through the tiny windows in the kitchen and the lounge. The view from the kitchen peeps over the beach and the harbour and is so postcard-perfect it’s hard to believe it’s real. Even though the good weather gets the tourists out of their ‘smelly anoraks’, as LLB calls them, he declares that his favourite time is February half term.

“The weather might be miserable, but you can be wintry and miserable next to a cosy fire and next door to a pub, and there’s no-one in the village.” Roll on soggy February! One thing’s for sure, there’s enough love, laughter and wicked, witty repartee in this house to keep anybody warm.

* Charmed: Fore Street, Port Isaac, Cornwall 01208 881101 ■



charmed



Laurence designed a range of t-shirts for the Llewelyn-Bowen boutique

‘Charmed’, the Llewelyn-Bowen boutique opened in Port Isaac in March this year, selling everything from handmade beads to top-end designer labels including Pucci. Find it at 44a Fore Street, Port Isaac, Cornwall

BRILLIANT BANTER: LLB & JACKIE

Laurence: We had beach hamsters in our larder. Mrs Llewelyn-Bowen doesn’t countenance the fact we might have had rats, they were beach hamsters...

Jackie: They had made a terrible mess and I called the man in and he took one look at the larder and he said ‘get your husband to knock a bit of wood up against the hole’ and I said ‘my husband, knock a bit of wood up?’

L: It’s a bit like to saying to Mrs Michelangelo (not that Michelangelo

was the marrying kind) you’re husband’s a bit handy, why don’t you get him to carve a coat rack?!

J: Are you comparing yourself with Michelangelo now?

L: He’d love it if I did. He’d love a bit of my makeover magic.

J: We don’t even have a hammer. We did have one but I don’t know where it is. I’m more likely to knock something in with a hammer than Laurence.

L: There are certain phases of the moon where I have to hide the hammer...