

# Our beachside home is such a source of inspiration



Talented artist Tina Ellis-Brecknell and her husband Digby's seaside home is a much-loved treasure trove bursting with creativity and upcycled gems



Tina has given the living room a bright and breezy coastal feel. The wicker sofa was a lucky find at the recycling section of the local dump. She has covered this with a blue and white duvet cover bought from a charity shop and a selection of handmade cushions



The wooden sofa, designed by Tina and made by Digby, has been covered with a Lexington throw that was found in a charity shop. Tina painted the hot air balloon, which boasts a gold leaf basket



## INSIDER INFO

### THE HOME

A three-bedroom detached beachside chalet in St Brelade's Bay, Jersey. The property was built during the 1930s.

### WHO LIVES HERE?

Tina Ellis-Brecknell, her husband Digby and their children Libby, 14, and 11-year-old Marley. Tina, an artist, runs Fish 'n' Beads (tel: 01534 742348) from a beach shack at the side of the family's home. Here, she displays her own artwork and showcases pieces from other local artists, as well as running successful bead workshops where customers can make their own jewellery. Digby is an employment co-ordinator for the Jersey Employment Trust.

### WHAT'S YOUR BEST PIECE OF ADVICE?

'If, like us, you live in a fairly small home, don't be a hoarder and make sure that everything you own works well. For instance, in the kitchen all our knives are sharp, we have a good sturdy chopping board and just the right amount of crockery and pots and pans. There's certainly no room for an unused fondue set here!'

With its breathtaking views of golden sands and clear blue waters, it's easy to understand why Tina and Digby Ellis-Brecknell were instantly captivated by the charms of a quaint white cottage on one of Jersey's most popular beaches.

'Although at the time we were living in a lovely little home on the island, we had to face the fact that we'd totally outgrown it. With a toddler and new baby on the way, we were desperate to find something larger,' Tina recalls. Luckily, a tip-off from a friend proved fortuitous, leading the pair in the direction of this rather distinctive property in St Brelade's Bay.

'When we strolled through the Marram grass up to the rickety wrought iron gate and glanced at the panoramic view of this gorgeous sheltered bay, Digby and I were just so incredibly excited,' Tina adds. 'From the second we stepped inside, we realised that the cottage was fantastic and just the kind of place we would love to turn into our own special home.'

Moving in during October 2000 was surprisingly stress-free. 'Having worked abroad and travelled for many years, we didn't actually have much furniture or even that many possessions to transport,' Tina confides. 'We squeezed our bed and everything we owned into the car and, >



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Tina and Digby have deliberately kept their beachside conservatory bright and light but added plenty of touches of punchy colour. The Roberts radio was purchased from the Jersey Electricity Company. Tina bought the Welsh dresser and writing bureau in the conservatory from a charity shop and gave them a fresh coat of paint

▶ To make their kitchen feel less cramped, Tina and Digby decided to remove the doors from some of the cupboards. Tina says: 'It may not be everyone's taste but we find it works well for us and gives the room the illusion of being slightly larger.' The kitchen units have been painted in B&Q's Water

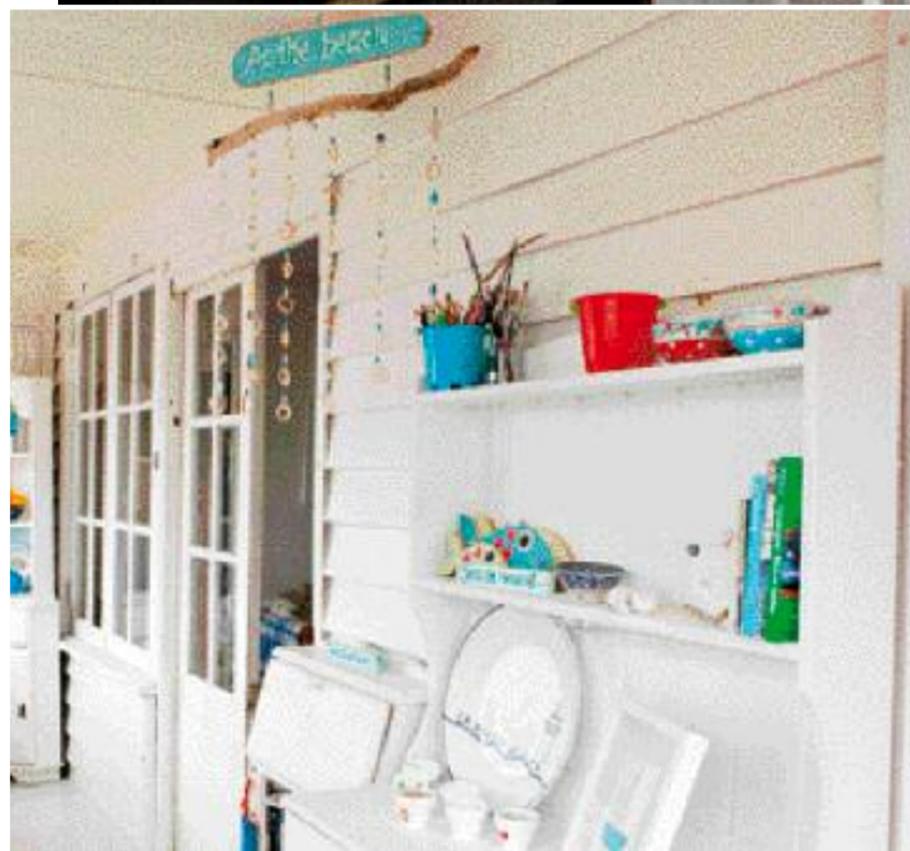


**Good idea!**

Tina and Digby can show off their colourful and quirky crockery and glassware with open shelving, as well as being a practical storage solution.



The kitchen tiles were reclaimed from a friend's home. They were getting rid of the old kitchen, they offered the tiles to me and I couldn't bear the thought of them being thrown away'



'I never tire of the view and feel so lucky to live here – it's our little coastal gem.'

◀ while Digby drove to St Brelade's, I hopped onto my bike, strapped Libby into the childseat and we were off to start our new life beside the sea.'

One of the Ellis-Brecknells' first jobs was painting the tongue-and-groove panelling in the living room, changing it from its original orange shade to a more subtle pale green. The walls and ceiling were then given a fresh coat of white paint. Next, pine tongue-and-groove boards were laid over the original wooden flooring and painted white. 'The property lends itself to a simple laid-back look and, since we walk straight in off the beach virtually every day, we knew that we needed to choose flooring that would be extremely practical,' says Tina.

In a bid to furnish their rather sparse new home, Digby decided to make a fabulous

purpose-built wooden sofa. 'It needed to be deep enough for a toddler to be able to snuggle in comfortably with us and also somewhere that I could easily change a baby's nappy, instead of having to grovel around on the floor,' says Tina. 'Digby made a wonderful job of it and this started the ball rolling.'

'Before we moved here, I used to buy furniture at auctions, paint it and then sell it so I decided to start doing this for our own home. Over the years we've given lots of old pieces a new lease of life. I guess you could say that I started upcycling long before it ever became trendy!'

Looking around the couple's vibrant and much-loved home, there's no doubt that Tina's talent for spotting the potential in an unwanted piece of furniture or ornament and transforming it into something beautiful and eye-catching has paid dividends. 'A lot of what we have bought over the years has come from charity or antique shops and even the recycling ▶

section at the local dump, but it's all sturdy and fit for purpose.'

When it came to redecorating, Tina and Digby never really had a master plan – their home has just evolved. 'Being a self-taught artist I am passionate about colour, texture and design and I've gradually repainted, choosing shades that seem relevant to the feel of every room and our own personalities. We definitely wanted to keep the living room and conservatory light and bright, but have gone for more daring shades in the kitchen and bedrooms which I feel work really well.'

Another striking feature that sets this home apart is the way Tina has cleverly incorporated her own artwork and used her creative skills to make the cottage a unique and very comfortable home. 'I started off making mirrors from driftwood and broken pieces of Victorian tiles that I found on the beach. This led on to creating various driftwood signs and larger paintings both for our cottage and to sell,' says Tina. 'Living in such an idyllic location is wonderful. I am never short of ideas for artwork either for our home or my shop, Fish 'n' Beads, which – very handily – is right next door. When we moved here the shop that had been selling



'Living in such an idyllic location is a constant source of inspiration, so I am never short of ideas for artwork either for our home or my shop.'

Tina has teamed walls painted in Dulux's Potters Clay and Antique Rose to stunning effect in Libby's bedroom

**Good idea!**

Digby cut down unwanted bunk beds to make single beds for the children, rather than having to buy two new ones for both of their bedrooms.

▶ The chest of drawers and wardrobe were painted in B&Q's Cotton White before Tina painted a mulberry tree and hearts to create extra impact

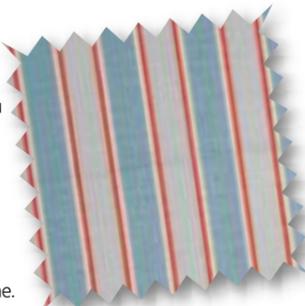


Tina has a palette of bold shades to create a stunning master bedroom. The walls are painted in B&Q's Clear Ocean and Crown's Intense Olive matt emulsion. The striking bed was designed by Tina and made by a friend as a wedding present. The navy and white cushions are from Lexington while the Kirstie Allsopp pillowcases are from Romerils in St Helier

**5 IDEAS TO STEAL**

**1 STICK WITH STRIPES**

Stripes are a playful pattern to use and you can incorporate them in any room. Whether you go for bold or a more subtle ticking stripe you can create a British seaside feel by choosing a red, white and blue colour scheme.



Coastal Stripe fabric in sky, £22 per m, Runaway Coast

**2 BE BESIDE THE SEA**

Tina has artistically made a mirror from driftwood and broken Victorian tiles that she found on the beach. Bring a beachside element into your home with seashells, driftwood and natural materials such as bamboo.



Driftwood candle holder, £11.99; driftwood four tea light holder, £7.99, both The Range

**3 GET AN ARTY LOOK**

Tina and Digby have used their artistic skills to personalise their home, as well as those of their friends. If you are not feeling creative then why not ask friends who are to make items for you instead of buying gifts? It's the imperfect quirks that make handmade treasures so special.

**4 SOFTEN YOUR SCHEME**

A nautical theme can run throughout your home but you can break up repetitive stripes with soft, floral patterns. Why not choose a vase of fresh flowers or pick vintage cushions with a delicate floral design.



Quilted cushion in Ivy Green, £32, Drift Living

**5 MAKE IT YOUR OWN**

Tina enjoys painting furniture to give it her own personalised stamp. If you're feeling creative, why not take a plain chest of drawers or a chair and paint a design straight on to it or use a stencil? The Windsor Collection six-drawer chest, £239.99 from Dunelm Mill is available exclusively online and will give you a blank canvas to work on.



CDs came up for rent. I turned it into a funky little beach shack where people make bead jewellery and I now have a wealth of regular customers.'

There's no denying that the Ellis-Brecknells have thoroughly embraced both their cottage and coastal lifestyle. Tina adds: 'When I open the blinds in our bedroom in the morning, the first thing I'm greeted by is the sight of an older couple swimming or boogie boarding and having fun. It's a fantastic way to start the day.'



Tina wanted to give the bathroom a fresh crisp look and teamed Dulux's Javan Dawn paint with a white basin, bath and tiles