



Carving a unique niche

FINE FEATURES: Furniture maker Sam Anderson has created the ultimate handmade home in one of Wensleydale's prettiest villages. **Sharon Dale** reports. Pictures by **Gary Longbottom**.

THEY say that great leaders are born not made and the same could be said of furniture makers. The best just have natural ability with brains hard-wired for woodwork. Sam Anderson is a good example. An art school graduate, he is completely self-taught and yet he has produced some of the finest pieces of furniture, all featuring the cabinet maker's trademark dovetail joints, inlays and veneers, along with original techniques that he has invented himself.

"It's just something I have always had an aptitude for and what I didn't know I picked up from books, the internet and from trial and error. Not having the formal

training has been an advantage in a way because it means I have developed my own style," says Sam, a former set and lighting designer, who worked in the theatre before going it alone. His work features in every room of his home, which borders the village green in East Witton, one of the prettiest places in Wensleydale.

The sitting room is home to a display table decorated with hieroglyphics and was built to house his collection of prehistoric artefacts. The dining room features a long-limbed curiosity cabinet, created for an exhibition. It tells the story of Orpheus and the underworld through colourful inlaid pictures, exquisite veneers and hidden compartments. It overlooks the biggest piece of furniture in the property,

an enormous burr elm table edged with sycamore and with a silver inlay. While this is an antique of the future, it is robust enough to survive day-to-day use by Sam, his wife, Georgina and their two daughters, Megan, 15, and Ellie, 11.

"It works well in this space and it's great for get-togethers and parties," says

Not having formal training has been an advantage, I developed my own style.

Sam, who also designed and made all the kitchen units.

The cabinets and the island in the centre confirm his love of curves, which he says add fluidity and softness, and the bold blue colour brings a modern twist to what was an old farm building.

The conversion from agricultural to residential use was hard won and the Andersons had to fight for four years before finally winning permission from the Yorkshire Dales National Park. The park authority finally conceded that their existing house, which is double-fronted but narrow, could be extended into the barns and sheds at the back. They also agreed that a green oak and glass





DESIGN SKILLS: Sam Anderson designed and built the cabinets for the kitchen, which is in converted farm buildings, main picture; Sam's Star table adds wow factor to the B&B room, above; Sam Anderson Fine Furniture Spectrum tables/stools in walnut from £210, inset.



STANDING FIRM: Sam and Georgina Anderson had to fight for four years for planning permission to convert an old farm building at their home in the Yorkshire Dales.

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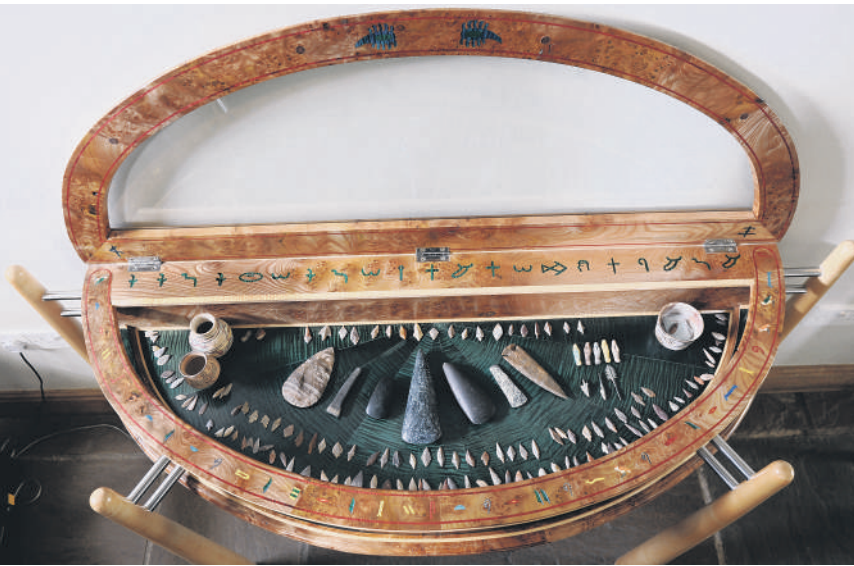
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STRIKING FEATURES: The glazed link between the house and converted farm buildings houses the dining room with dining table and Orpheus cabinet made by Sam, main picture; Sam in his workshop behind the family home, above; The display table made by Sam for his collection of prehistoric artefacts, left.

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link could be made to connect the two.

“It was frustrating having to wait for such a long time but we kept going. It was the best thing for the farm buildings because there was no other use for them and they had started to fall down. The house hadn’t been lived in for ten years either so altogether it was a big job,” says Georgina, a professional cook who is thrilled to have an extra-large kitchen for her catering business.

What really helped their case was their desire to turn the former farmstead into a live work property with Sam using some of the agricultural buildings as workshops. They are now crammed with tools, benches and timber sourced from local woodland, along with the family dogs who seem to enjoy the noise and activity.

Working from home in an idyllic, rural setting is a world away from their previous life in London, which was followed by a short period in Devon. They decided to relocate to Georgina’s native North Yorkshire 12 years ago when her father was ill and they have never regretted it.

Their home reflects their wanderlust and Georgina’s love of Africa. There are kelims used as curtains, paintings from Tanzania and an assortment of ornaments from all over the world. The hand-crafted items and the keepsakes are complemented by contemporary touches like a Mondrian chair, the “Stay Glam” print and Sam’s new Spectrum range of furniture.

Although much of his work is bespoke, heirloom pieces, this is a more contemporary and affordable offering designed with urban properties in mind.

It’s also multi-functional. The walnut stools, inlaid with a band of colour, double as tables and cost £210 each, while the butler’s tray can be used as anything from a bedside table to a tray.

It’s another source of income for this self-sufficient family, who also have a successful B&B room, created from a ground-floor guest annexe that was rarely used. It features in the Sawday’s guide and is a sensational mish-mash of Sam’s work, inherited furniture and, dangling from the trusses, the top of the family’s Yurt, which is erected in the garden every summer.

“Renting it means I’ve been able to cut

“The house hadn’t been lived in for ten years so it was a big job.”

back a bit on the weekend catering work and spend more time with the children. It’s really nice to meet people and I enjoy telling them about the area,” says Georgina, who grew up near Masham and never dreamed she’d come back after seeking out the big city.

“I didn’t appreciate it when I was younger and wasn’t sure I wanted to move back to Yorkshire but it’s the best thing I’ve ever done.”

■ **The Grange B&B, www.thegrangebedandbreakfast.co.uk; Sam Anderson Fine Furniture, www.samandersonfinefurniture.co.uk**



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