

Choo-choo chic

This goods wagon which hit the end of the line in a village near Harrogate has been transformed into a fabulous holiday let. **Sharon Dale** reports.

When Pauline Medley Weston and her husband Martin bought the former railway station house in the village of Hampsthwaite, near Harrogate, in 1991, they also inherited an old dry goods wagon that had been abandoned there when the branch line was axed in 1950.

The wagon was in a sorry state and slid further into decrepitude as the Westons spent the next 30 years working and bringing up their children while renovating the former station master's house and creating a sensational annexe, which now earns its keep as The Platform, a popular holiday let.

It was Pauline who spotted the wagon's potential as a second holiday rental after being inspired by Channel 4's *Amazing Spaces* series fronted by architect George Clarke, who reveals that small can be beautiful and quite big enough if you are creative with design.

"I thought it would be a nice little project but Martin didn't want to take anything else on," she says.

It took lockdown to change his mind and then, as Pauline puts it, "He got stuck in."

Constructed in the 1930s, the wagon had been left at the side of the old track bed. "You see many of these abandoned wagons in farmers' fields as they use them for storage but they are generally completely dilapidated with only a rusted frame and rotting timbers," says Pauline.

"The saviour for ours was that it had sat on free-draining ash so the steelwork was in surprisingly good condition despite the wood cladding mostly being beyond salvage."

Martin, an engineer and gifted DIYer,

worked out that he could move it to a peaceful spot overlooking woodland by using his mini digger and laying scaffolding poles underneath the wagon.

After completely stripping the timber off the steel frame, he treated and painted any that could be salvaged and reused.

Replacement wood was sourced from reclamation yards to preserve the original look of the vehicle. All the timber inside the wagon is also reclaimed and the beams were cut and prepared by a woodyard in sizes to match the original.

Some of the ironwork in the wagon was reproduced by a good friend in the village who has a forge.

Between the outer and inner timbers is foil insulation and moisture protection with more insulation hidden in the roof, which is covered with one piece of rubber.

"The original coverings were canvas that were just glued to the wood and regularly painted to preserve the waterproof finish, hence most abandoned wagons are in such poor condition," says Pauline.

She and Martin enjoy collecting vintage, salvage and antiques and Pauline is also renowned for her

upcycling prowess, all of which played a huge part in the restoration/conversion project. Her former business, Country Chic, specialised in pre-loved furniture, which she often transformed with paint.

Many of the internal fixtures and fittings have been sourced from reclamation yards and salvage fairs and from eBay.

There have been some great finds, including vintage train luggage racks and a mirror and original lighting from British Rail sleeping compartments, along with original and replica railway signage.

The Goods Wagon, painted in a



ONCE RACK AND RUIN: Above, the kitchen with 1930s aluminium larder units, stripped back and polished by Martin; left to right, the bed with storage under; the shower room with luggage racks holding the towels; this vintage cast-iron base has been topped with marble to create a sturdy outside dining area; inset opposite, a replica railway sign.



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FREIGHTED OUT: Top, the 1930s goods wagon has been transformed into a bijoux holiday let; middle left, a planter made from railway sleepers; middle right, the sitting out deck which looks over woodland that is abundant with wildlife; above, the bed surrounded by railway memorabilia.

➔ smart grey, now has mains water and electricity and a sewage treatment pumping system.

The property is a great example of how small space living can work wonderfully.

The kitchen area has 1950s restored steel cabinets and opposite are 1930s aluminium larder units, stripped back and polished by Martin. Mod cons include the electric hob, microwave and fridge.

There are two comfy leather armchairs, strategically placed to make the most of views from the rear window, from where you can see the flora and fauna in the ancient woodland.

The sleeping area has a raised double bed with storage space beneath made from an old dresser base and there is an original luggage rack above and a wall-mounted TV set.

Reclaimed stained glass windows above the bed and in the shower room look sensational. Martin bought them a few years ago and they are a good example of the old adage "it'll come in".

There's also a modern shower room accessed via a space-saving sliding door and an electric heater for the cooler months.

Just for fun and perfectly in keeping is the vintage railway porter's hat and waistcoat from a York car boot sale, which now hangs on one of the walls.

Outside is a patio area, a railway bench that belonged to Pauline's parents, a barbecue and a separate open-sided building with a vintage cast-iron table with marble top for al fresco dining.

Turning their annexe into a holiday let and adding a second by bringing the derelict goods wagon back to life has given the couple a great deal of satisfaction and they have branded their enterprise Station Staycations, email stationstaycations@gmail.com.

"We love sharing this place with other people. It's such a peaceful, rural spot with lovely views, plenty of wildlife and an ancient pond and yet you are ten minutes walk from the village and Harrogate is five miles away," says Pauline.

"Some guests use our accommodation as a base to explore the area, some book both our lets for get-togethers and others spend most of their time here.

"We had one couple in The Goods Wagon who stayed for three days and didn't go anywhere.

"They lived in a town and just wanted to soak up the views and enjoy the tranquillity."

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