

# Enchantment in Egmere

*TONY HALL takes a look at a cracking coastal home  
in a quiet corner of the north Norfolk coast*

WORDS AND PICTURES: TONY HALL



SITTING ROOM: Sofas from Ikea. Coffee table from Oka. Little desk, stool and bookcase from Littleblood, Little Walsingham, 01328 820720. Antique Spanish-style door with grille from Holt Antiques, 01263 478110. Lamps from John Lewis





**GUEST BEDROOM:**

Bed from Feather & Black. Bedding from John Lewis. Chest of drawers a family piece. Wall hanging from The Rug Company. Lights from John Lewis. Throw by Bronte Tweeds. Mirror from Latimer Designs. 'You Rock' cushion from Thornham Deli Lifestyle, 01485 512194

**KITCHEN AND DINING AREA:**

Units by Benchmark, rug from Zara Home, tiles by John Butler. Soul Food sign from Heals, pantry cupboard from Heidi in West Bridgeford Notts. Table from Ikea, chairs from Heals, green cushion from Birdie Fortescue, Burnham Market, 01328 738634. Little cushion from Thornham Deli Lifestyle

YOU COULD be forgiven for not knowing anything about Egmore, one of Norfolk's 'lost villages', villages that had ceased to exist by the end of the middle ages. Today it is a hamlet, with around a dozen or so dwellings. The impressive church, which dates from the early 14th century, is in ruins, although the tower still stands full height.

It lies about a third of a mile from the hamlet, both of which are surrounded by rolling farm land owned by The Holkham Estate, which until recently owned most

of the dwellings. They had been built around 1873 as farm labourers' cottages and were extended at a later date.

As I have found many times, bringing you these features on people and their homes, their love of the area often develops early on in childhood from visiting the county on family holidays.

Such is the case for Natalie Kirby. Her father Paul, from the Leicester/Nottingham area, spent many a holiday in Walcott in the 50s, so the family bond with Norfolk was established.

Mum Pepita was born in San Sebastian, but spent most of her life in Madrid. She studied politics and languages, which led her to England. Under the impression she was off to London on her own adventure she was somewhat surprised to find herself being settled into halls of residence in Leicester.

In the summer of 1968 she met Paul. While raising Natalie and her brother Sven they managed to start an electrical engineering business called Charnvel, recently involved with the wind farm at Sheringham Shoal.

"Two holiday events of early childhood I remember," recalls Natalie, "besides staying in this lovely area, were ice creams at Wells and father hiring a dinghy at Stiffkey in 1975, which capsized with me in it. He is rubbish with boats.

"It had always been my ambition to one day





have a home here, but although I work for the family business, where I have worked in every department, from accounts and the drawing office, to purchase management and quality assurance. However, having just one wage, most homes up here are just too expensive for me. I have searched each week for years on both Rightmove and the EDP property pages and finally perseverance has paid off.

"In 2014 I spotted that the Holkham Estate was selling off these pink cottages in batches, all by sealed bid. It was a huge gamble, but one not to be missed," continues Natalie. "I came to look, stood in the garden with waist-high weeds, gazing at this pink rendered cottage, looked up at the sky, a typical wide Norfolk sky, and there and then felt I belonged.

"Following a long chat with dad, as the properties were of non-standard construction, I settled on my offer but added eight to it as my magic lucky number. Fortunately that just clinched it.

"The building work was dictated by funds and a very strict budget and took a year, with dad doing lots, but I am just so happy with the end results. We came often on a Friday night, renting close by, to follow progress and get stuck in. I knocked down walls to create two large downstairs areas, the kitchen/dining space with bi-fold doors to the terrace, and the spacious sitting room. Upstairs I

have kept one side for myself, the master, plus Ollie's bedroom, managing to put in an adjoining en-suite with Jack and Jill doors.

"On the other side of the landing is the guest bedroom, also with an en-suite, for my parents. In the master I have a large armoire/wardrobe. It so reminds me of *The Tales of Narnia*, in that I am looking for a magic image in the back when it is opened! In the planning, I intend, once again as funds improve, to add a proper dining room on the back, enlarging the kitchen with a centre island." ▶

**MASTER BEDROOM:** Bed from Feather & Black. Bedding from John Lewis. Armoire from Loaf. Bedside table from Holt Antiques. Sign from Littleblood. Rug from Next. Mirror from Latimer Designs. Wall colour Chesterton Grey by Farrow & Ball

**FAMILY BATHROOM:** Suite and tiling from Plumblin in Nottingham



I ask Natalie her starting point for the interior design. "It all began with finding a worn door with a grille at Holt Antiques," explains Natalie. "I thought it had a Spanish feel to it, with the weathered worn paint colours of grey and dark blue, so I have used it in an alcove in the sitting room."

"Following the colours through, I decided on wide flooring boards done in a grey Danish 'Lye' finish, throughout downstairs, then picked up the same feel in paint colours upstairs on odd walls and furniture. I picked out the blue in items such as the sofas, so the whole process was organic and followed through. I have also loved sourcing finds locally, such as the old desk in the living room, from Young Blood in Walsingham. Things come to me; I think you attract things that you love."

"I am a food lover. I enjoy doing a warm artichoke salad with poached egg, or chickpea and chorizo stews. I am amazed how both Wells and this coast has rejuvenated without being spoilt, with more interesting shops, coffee houses, pubs and restaurants."

"The choice of local produce is amazing, with the Walsingham Farm Shop nearby a firm favourite, so it follows on that my kitchen is my favourite room and within it is my favourite item, the large pantry cupboard. When you open the doors everything is to hand and on display, glasses, crockery, everything in its place."

"Oliver and I, plus my partner Paul and

***"I came to look, stood in the garden with waist-high weeds, gazing at this pink rendered cottage, looked up at the sky, a typical wide Norfolk sky and there and then felt I belonged"***

his son Oliver, like going for a walk to the sea at Wells, maybe getting the little train back.

"The boys love the new ice cream parlour there. We also like going to the Globe Inn, both Ollies playing football on The Buttlands, and us with a

glass of wine to hand outside.

"Mum and Dad love the area so much," concludes Natalie, "that they have now bought the cottage next door. Living here is very therapeutic, I find. A walk along the lane down to the ruined church reminds you of the history of this romantic spot. This cottage and hamlet really is a case of romance re-found."



## FACT FILE

**Owners:** Natalie Kirby and son Oliver

**Property:** Semi detached country cottage.

**Built:** 1873

**Location:** Egmere, Norfolk

**Bought:** 2014

**Moved in:** 2015

**Professions:** Natalie works for the family engineering business.

**Favourite room:** Kitchen as centre of the home.

**Favourite item:** My pantry cupboard; everything to hand in one place.

**Favourite interiors shop:** Littleblood in Walsingham and also Nomad & The Bower Bird at Holkham

**Favourite shop:** Walsingham Farm Shop. Very good produce. Also Back to the Garden, Letheringsett.

**Favourite part of the county:** Wells. It has everything. We sometimes go on the little train.

**Favourite day out:** Wells again, for same reasons.

**Favourite waste of time:** You will think I am crazy, but making the beds!

**Favourite walk:** Burnham Overy Staithe, especially at 8am to go out to the peninsula and meditate.

**Favourite pub:** Black Lion in Little Walsingham, where weekends begin.

**Favourite restaurant:** Ship in Brancaster. Sitting by the fire in winter, or outside watching the boats in summer.

**Hobbies:** Gardening, cooking and meditating.

**Best thing:** The views and location.

**Most memorable moment:** With Ollie on my knee watching the orange sky disappear over the water at Burnham Overy Staithe.



**EXTERIOR:** Was a farm labourer's cottage, added to over the years. Painted in traditional pink. Built 1873. Previously owned by the Holkham Estate

Do you have a beautiful house, large or small, that you feel is worthy of a feature by **Tony Hall**? If so, we would love to hear from you. Please email [tonyhalleypix@waitrose.com](mailto:tonyhalleypix@waitrose.com) or write to Tony Hall, EDP Norfolk magazine, Prospect House, Rouen Road, Norwich, NR1 1RE; [www.tonyhalleypix.com](http://www.tonyhalleypix.com)