

# Separate housewives

A century of this period cottage has shared it with two spouses, yet it feels harmonious



...eds. I depart from St International, the terminus now tinged with the glamour of Le Cont... thanks to Eurostar, and with pricy retail outlets to relieve our overseas mighty euros before the grimy streets of

any on the rather less (Bedford-St Pancras, Julian Barnes's latest longlisted *The Sense of an Ending* doesn't exactly come to the prove in time, it holds us in a trickily unreliable... Hmmm. I feel a coming on myself as of St Albans: "for "time"

more than but Church a large and... ates' cab ride... n, in pleasant... tly dull Bed... e — certainly... o discover... I been the... the nearby... and its oldest... me 400 years... ppedition was... out history —... as "that cer... at the point... perfections of... inadequacies

a far more personal... pected. Julian Good... vner, seems a totally... ough, as neither the... Mrs Goodyear was in... borate his version, I... led. I don't think so... ry: 26 years ago, Mr... dyear (Ann) bought... the High Street from... the famous Scottish... ran trombonist was... en on telling them... oximity of the Co-op... the local bus service... under his roof, but... ut restoring its char... rously proportioned... d three receptions... ily undulating wide... pine floors, ancient... orian fireplaces... ers of paint off the... hard way, with wire



Church Cottage has an interesting history — both ancient and modern



**Church Cottage, Bedfordshire, £675,000**

**What is it?** A five-bedroom house dating from the 17th century  
**Where is it?** In the village of Silsoe, near Flitwick  
**Who is selling?** Strutt & Parker, 01582 764343, struttandparker.com



wool, until a helpful friend pointed out that you could just send them away and have them dipped.

Anyway, despite or because of all this DIY endeavour, after about 10 years Ann departed, pretty amicably by the sound of it, and Mrs G number two, Catherine, moved in. And the life of the Goodyear family 2.0, most particularly the view from the kitchen window, was moulded by the new arrangement, as Julian, an IT consultant, had had a house built on a spare bit of garden to facilitate the switch of partners. No, it wasn't for Ann to move into — now that would have been a setup worthy of a novel, though maybe *J Trollope*, rather than *J Barnes*. It was sold to finance Ann's move.

But how did the second Mrs Goodyear settle into another woman's house, I hear you wondering? I certainly did, the question driving out all the inquiries I should have been making about the rather unusual sash window shutters (Goodyear calls them his "wooden net curtains") or the curved Georgian door to the dining room (probably salvaged from a 19th-century skip when they were doing renovations up at the big house).

It must have helped that Ann had taken most of the furniture with her, and Catherine has made her mark with the fresh-looking paint colours on the cosily uneven old walls. "Farrow & Ball?" I inquire. "B&Q," Goodyear

answers unhesitatingly. You can see why I trusted him.

Along with the warm colours, lush rugs on the wooden floors and mix of antique and invitingly squishy furniture, the dozens of family photos (his kids, her kids, his kids with her kids) give Church House a cosy and happy atmosphere. But the clincher is that Catherine lived with Ann's old kitchen for more than 10 years. Relaxed or what? In fact, they only did up the kitchen a couple of years ago, a firm from Lincolnshire putting in solid new cupboards, oak work surfaces and a snazzy double butler sink.

There is also a splendid new Rangemaster cooker, chosen, I feel, by the man of the house, who shows me how its induction rings boil water in seconds, then — ta da! — splays his palm on the same ring to demonstrate that it does not actually get hot. (It works by generating heat inside the pot, rather than underneath it in the conventional manner.)

So there it is, a house dating back hundreds of years, with another rich human story of its own adding the latest layers to its history. When he and Catherine move out to downsize, Goodyear says, its new owners "won't buy it, they'll adopt it". So let's have one last word from Barnes. The novel, he says, "is about character developed over time". Just like a house, then.

*Eleanor Mills is away. If you'd like her to look at a property you're selling, email [etb@sundaytimes.co.uk](mailto:etb@sundaytimes.co.uk)*

## ASK THE EXPERTS

### The planner

The family renting the house next door has attached a large area of canopy to its rear, along with electrical sockets and plumbing for hot water. There is a tent on the lawn, in which four people sleep, and they appear to be running a business from the house. Does all this require planning permission?  
*DH, by email*

Householders have substantial "permitted development" rights to extend their houses. Assuming that the house is not detached, is not a listed building and is not in a conservation area, a single-storey extension of up to three metres deep and four metres high can be built without permission. That said, extensions must match building regulations, and there are strict rules governing the installation of new electrical wiring. The tent does not require permission if it is occupied by the immediate family. Planning rules permit a householder to run a business from one room, but if it employs more than one person, or generates many visitors, it usually requires consent. Discuss your concerns with your council's planning enforcement officers.

*Michael Haslam OBE is a director of Michael Haslam Associates; [hmhaslam@btinternet.com](mailto:hmhaslam@btinternet.com)*

### The lettings agent

My boyfriend lets out his property to two tenants. One of the tenants has complained that the other drinks far too much, despite paying his rent on time. Yet the tenant who is complaining keeps his room like that of a squatter. If we get evidence that the boozing tenant's behaviour is antisocial, would we have to give him notice?  
*DW, by email*

Depending on the nature of the tenancy, your boyfriend may have the right to evict the tenants. You can seek possession during a fixed-term tenancy only in certain circumstances, when one of the grounds for possession apply and the terms of the tenancy make provision for it to be ended. These grounds are reasons why you need your property back. He would have to apply to a county court, which will look at the reasons and decide if a possession order is fair — ie, if there is a nuisance to neighbours. It is a criminal offence to evict tenants other than by court action. Often, these situations can be improved by speaking to the tenants.

*Frank Webster is a partner at the Oxford branch of Finders Keepers; [finders.co.uk](http://finders.co.uk)*

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