

ROUNDHOUSE *Glamping*

Pam Brown has added three luxurious roundhouses to her thriving self-catering holiday venture. Carol Anne Strange visited Nether Farm to find out about providing holidaymakers with the perfect escape

When Pam Brown and her partner Keith bought Nether Farm at Nether Sturston, just outside Ashbourne, in 2003, it took imagination and a leap of faith to transform the dilapidated farm buildings and land into the beautiful place it is today.

The couple spent two years renovating the main house before turning their attention to converting the 17th century barns into self-catering holiday accommodation. Once that proved a success, they decided to extend their vision and look at

ways in which they could offer something slightly different to complement what they had already achieved.

Pam says, 'We took into consideration how guests could best enjoy the peaceful location and the amazing views, and we decided that roundhouses offered the perfect solution.'

They commissioned eco-buildings firm Rotunda Roundhouses to design and build three hand-crafted, timber-framed, circular lodges that had a 'wow' factor, and these were sited with thought and sensitivity on the private farmland nestled

amongst the wild-flower meadow and fledgling woodland within the delightful catchment of Henmore Brook.

With Nether Farm being enviably situated on the edge of the Peak District National Park, it was essential that the buildings were constructed with environmental objectives to satisfy key planning requirements.

For 30 years Pam had previously run an environmental consultancy practice that specialised in the physical characteristics of the landscape, working in both the built and



ABOVE: A lovely spot for a leisurely stay

LEFT: The roundhouses are deceptively light and spacious inside

RIGHT: Pam relaxing at one of the Roundhouses



natural environment. She was able to draw upon her experience to provide the perfect situation for the roundhouses, maximising the physiological benefit to those who stay at Nether Farm.

‘We needed to site the roundhouses where they would have fantastic views but wouldn’t intrude on the landscape,’ says Pam. ‘Aesthetically, the roundhouse moulds more readily into an environment with trees and hedgerows than a square building and because the windows all face down the valley in a north-westerly direction, the sun doesn’t strike them and therefore there is no light bouncing off them to spoil other people’s enjoyment of the views.’

The roundhouses certainly sit naturally and unobtrusively within the Henmore valley, where the Shrovetide football

game is traditionally played along the river.

Nether Farm has certainly evolved since it came out of the Sturston estate in 1917. Sturston is listed in *Domesday Book* as owned by Ulfkil and Wudia having ‘11 villans, 10 bordars and 1 mill (rendering) 8s’ and is within the charismatically named Appletree Hundred.

The landscape around Nether Farm is picturesque and teeming with wildlife. A keen eye might even spot a kingfisher darting over the river. Pam points to the larch plantations and explains how the vertical larch on the outside of the roundhouses mirrors the trees. It’s the details such as this that show the careful consideration that has gone into the design process.

Pam says, ‘Not only are the roundhouses aesthetically

pleasing, they are also extremely well-crafted and heavily insulated using sustainable and locally-sourced materials.'

Since completion, the Nether Farm roundhouses – named Henmore Water, Sturston Winds and Bradley Wood – have proved to be highly popular with glampers who are looking for a tranquil Derbyshire get-away that is close to nature but just a short walk from the delights of Ashbourne and offers luxurious comfort and all mod cons.

There is something special about being in such a beautifully crafted roundhouse. On opening the door of Henmore Water, you step into a surprisingly spacious, light-filled, round room. There's a king-size bed, dining table, a cleverly designed kitchenette with integrated sink, hob and fridge, and an attached private shower room with toilet and sink. There are comfortable chairs to relax in while taking in the peaceful pastoral views through the double-glazed panoramic windows or you can lie back at night and look at the stars through the domed central window. As for all the mod cons, each roundhouse has a TV, Bluetooth sound system, WiFi, downlighters with a dimmer facility, and temperature-controlled heating to make sure you stay cosy during colder spells.

Step outside and there are Adirondack chairs on a sheltered verandah to relax in, as well as your own gravel patio area with a table, chairs and barbecue for al fresco dining surrounded by birdsong, landscaped meadow and the lush valley beyond.

It's clear that careful consideration has been given to the site, design and craftsmanship of the roundhouses, but it's the choice of furniture and furnishings,



The dome window at the top allows star-gazing at night



Simple and stylish interiors with characterful finishing touches

inspired by Pam's love of clean and simple Scandinavian design, that brings unique character to Nether Farm's roundhouses. From the kitchenette crockery, hand-made by Dave Green Ceramics, to the painted cast-iron and wood dining table, there are individual touches that add to the charm of the glamping experience.

Pam says, 'The development of the roundhouses was intended to extend and enhance the existing ethos of the farm by supporting our care of the environment, our place within the community and, most of all, by allowing us to maintain the farm for generations to come.'

Pam originally lived in Stourbridge before buying Nether Farm, but she feels completely at home here.

'I love Derbyshire,' she says, 'There is gentle rolling countryside then stark moorland within a very short distance and it changes not only seasonally but with the



ABOVE LEFT: Everything you need is attractively and neatly arranged in the kitchen area

ABOVE RIGHT: Finishing touches that add character

RIGHT: One of the uncluttered up-to-date bathrooms

A SELECTION OF B&BS WITH A DIFFERENCE

Jelly Bar B&B,
16 Wobbly Road,
Ashbourne, DE64 8XX.
USP: Yurts and hot tub
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weather, which makes it a very dynamic environment in which to live.'

As a result of making sure that everything runs smoothly at Nether Farm so that guests enjoy their holidays, Pam rarely has time to sit back. There are pigs, chickens and bees to look after, vegetables to grow and seasonal foraging on the farm to find tasty fruits and mushrooms. She does have some help though.

'I manage the Barns and Roundhouses with the support of my daughter-in-law, Tamsyn, and we have some wonderful local helpers, including Jayne and Heather plus our gardener, Ashley.'

As a passionate foodie and cook, Pam loves to bake. When guests arrive, they are often greeted with a jar of home-made biscuits, cake or freshly baked bread, and there are usually a few provisions in the fridge along with fresh herbs (when in season) growing in pots on each verandah.

When it's time for her own holiday, the success of Nether Farm is never far from Pam's thoughts. She says, 'I'm always looking for ideas and inspiration that I can take back to enhance the experience of our guests.'

Recent inspiration led to the construction of a meeting area with barbecue and fire-pit and they have other projects in the pipeline.

A stay at Nether Farm is certainly a treat, and Pam hopes that guests will leave feeling reinvigorated. She says, 'We hope they appreciate it as a sanctuary or refuge where they can recharge their spirits and reconnect with themselves away from the stress of the everyday. It's a getaway that allows people to get back in touch with nature in the beautiful Derbyshire countryside.' ♦

www.netherfarmroundhouses.co.uk

