

# THE REMOTE RUIN THAT CAST A SPELL

**FROM THE ASHES** RESTORING THIS REMOTE, FIRE-RAVAGED BARN WAS A SERIOUS CHALLENGE FOR ITS OWNER, **SHARON DALE**. PICTURES BY **GARY LONGBOTTOM**.

**R**egular readers of this newspaper will know that the homes for sale in our Saturday property section are seriously

seductive. The fabulous locations, stunning interiors and untapped potential send many of us into reverie followed by frantic calculations and sighs of: "If only I could win the lottery".

For others, like Dave Craven, the impact is far more dramatic. An advert in January 2005 sent Dave up a two-mile track to a remote fire-ravaged Dales barn and resulted in a challenging four-year project.

"I saw the barn in the *Yorkshire Post* and ended up on a track in the middle of nowhere. Half way down, I said, 'Whatever it is, there is no way I am buying it,'" says Dave.

"But I saw it and that was it. I wanted it. The position is amazing, the views are stunning and it is so secluded. There are no neighbours for four miles, yet Settle is a short drive away."

There were just three walls left standing after the blaze that devastated Bookilber Barn, near Settle, in 1996.

Built in 1742 as a laithe barn, it stands alone on the old drover's road between York and Lancaster.

It became a long house in 1856 and was later owned by the Bradford Gurdjieff Society, a philosophical group, and was classed as a retreat/outdoor pursuits centre when it burnt down.

Developer Robert Rymer bought the derelict building and won a battle with the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority to turn it into a dwelling.

"He got the planning permission then put it up for sale," says Dave.

"I bought it for £180,000 and it was advertised for £220,000 so it was good price and I knew it was a rare opportunity. It already had planning permission, so wasn't covered by the new local occupancy restrictions."

Dave is a developer and his Bradford-based business Bossdean Properties deals in industrial and commercial property. But his first foray into residential restoration made him realise that dealing with historic property in a sensational location can stir emotions and bust budgets.

"I thought I'd have it finished in 18 months, then sell it on, but it didn't happen like that. It took a lot longer and I got very involved to the point where I had no intention of selling it."

"I have stopped adding up how much I have spent on it but it's at least treble what I first thought.

The budget went out of the window a long time ago.



**ROOM WITH A VIEW:** Looking out from Bookilber Barn, near Settle.



**RUINS:** When Dave Craven first saw Bookilber Barn it only had three walls standing



**TRANSFORMED:** The restored barn in the splendid isolation of its setting.