

Home



Left: the family of Maryella Pigott at Trewoofe House in Cornwall. Above: Emma, Clare, Sarah and Stella as teenagers. Right: the hallway

The Napers' original house was a two-bedroom cottage with the studio, too small for Maryella (named after her mother and aunt), who was by then divorced, and her daughters, so the family stayed in what was once the Knights' home while the house was extended. Trewoofe is now a large, comfortable home with the kitchen and breakfast room at the centre, a cosy sitting room and the dining room on one side (part of the original cottage), and the drawing room, conservatory and a large art studio on the other side. The house has a warm, bohemian feel, with a

mix of colours and wallpapers, open fires and a Rayburn. The sisters, aged between 11 and 17 when they moved here and now all in their fifties and sixties, remember the house being full of friends who would come to stay in summer. "We swam and cycled, played French cricket and had croquet parties in the garden. We were all brown as berries," Sarah says. Their mother, a passionate gardener, grew masses of fruit and vegetables. "The 'good life' was part of her vision when we moved here. We had to help with harvesting for a couple of hours before we could do our own thing,

which usually meant going to the beach." The Napers created the garden, planting trees and shrubs, with Charles's stone-bordered flowerbeds and stone benches in situ. Maryella landscaped a field previously let to a farmer to design the garden as it is today, filled with plants including 30 different camellias and a tree planted for each of her 12 grandchildren. Family gatherings at Trewoofe have included 18th and 21st parties and Sarah, Stella and Clare's wedding receptions. Sarah and Clare live locally while Emma, the eldest, lives in America and Stella in Bath, but all the sisters and their children have gathered at Trewoofe every summer and alternate Christmases for decades. Emma's son Andrew held his engagement party here, with family coming over from the US. "My children feel this is their family home, even though they weren't brought up here," Stella says. "Trewoofe is a defining influence on us. We are an exceptionally close family because of it." Before they moved to Cornwall, the family would come for holidays, staying at a

nearly B&B. "I remember Ella as very gentle, dressed in rust and browns and a beret, smoking roll-ups," Sarah says. Her name continues through the generations: Emma has a daughter with that name and Clare's daughter Zoe has also named her three-year-old Ella. The enormous challenge of dividing the house's century of treasures was helped by Maryella's will, stipulating that the sisters were to draw "lots" using a pack of cards to decide in which order they would choose. "We divided things into sections, such as a group of the four most valuable paintings, then drew the cards," Sarah says. "We used the same system to help our 12 children decide what to keep." Family members still stay at the house, but as each person says goodbye for the last time everyone is in tears, Stella says. "We've had the great fortune of being part of Trewoofe but must pass it on to new owners and hope they love it too." **Cherry Maslen**
The Napers feature in the exhibition Lamorna Colony Pioneers in Penzance until Sep 30; penleehouse.org.uk

A HARD SELL

The emotional wrench of letting go of a home that's been in a family for more than a century

Selling the family home you grew up in is always an emotional wrench, but how much more agonising when the house has been in the family for more than a hundred years and a much-loved multigenerational hub for decades? For Stella Pakeman and her three sisters there is yet another rich layer of family history. Trewoofe House, in west Cornwall, was one of the homes belonging to the Lamorna Colony of artists, part of the Newlyn School famed for painting local scenes in the open air. The house is full of art by members of the colony and has to be divided between the family, as well as mountains of personal family treasures collected over a century. The house, idyllically set in a lush valley a mile above Lamorna Cove, four miles from Penzance, was built in 1913 by the artists Ella and

Charles Naper, the great-aunt and uncle of Stella and her sisters. It was inherited by their mother, Maryella Pigott, Ella's niece, who moved there from Berkshire with her daughters in the 1970s. When Maryella died in January, the sisters tried to find a way to keep the home that meant so much to them. "We thought about running it as an arty B&B," Stella says. "We love it deeply, but ultimately none of us are in a position to buy it, so we can only hope for a buyer who will cherish it." The six-bedroom home, set in 1.5 acres of beautiful gardens that Maryella opened to the public, is on the market with the Cornish estate agent Jonathan Cunliffe for £1.2 million. "One of my earliest memories of coming to Trewoofe is of the artistic community," says Stella, who was 11 years old when they moved to Cornwall. "Suddenly

everyone we knew was a painter or writer or related to one; we knew the children and grandchildren of the original Lamorna artists. Every house had original art on the walls, it was so interesting and enlivening and so different to Berkshire." Charles Naper was a landscape artist who painted the dramatic cliffs between Porthcurno and Land's End and exhibited at the Royal Academy. Ella was a potter and jeweller, creating beautiful art nouveau-style pieces that sold at Liberty's in London. Charles designed a workshop for Ella and a studio for himself, which was rebuilt in the 1920s and still stands today. The Napers' friends and neighbours were Dame Laura and Harold Knight; a nude painting of Ella by Laura hangs in the National Portrait Gallery in London. Laura Knight's *Spring*, depicting Ella and Charles in a bucolic landscape, is the main painting in an exhibition on the colony that is running at Penlee House Gallery in Penzance.

“Everyone we knew was a painter or writer”

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