



It's over Goldsmith finally sells

It's been a long time coming, but Zac Goldsmith has finally sold his Devon estate. The Conservative MP first put eight-bedroom Walreddon Manor, near Tavistock, on the market a year ago for £7m, following the break-up of his marriage to Sheherazade Goldsmith. The price was reduced to £6.5m in June, but it has finally sold to a hedge-fund manager from London for "quite a bit more than that", my source reveals. The 543-acre estate on the fringes of Dartmoor includes the manor house, a coachhouse, two cottages, two farmhouses, a listed barn and river frontage. The house was once owned by Hugh Hudson, who directed the 1981 film Chariots of Fire.

Home couture Versace sale

Its facade was beamed around the world in 1997, when its owner, the fashion designer Gianni Versace, was murdered on its front steps. Perhaps this notoriety is why Casa Casuarina, aka the Versace Mansion, on Ocean Drive, Miami, has just seen its price slashed by \$25m. Don't go expecting a bargain, though — it will still set you back \$100m. The 19,500 sq ft property, which Versace bought in 1992, has remained exactly as he left it, with 10 bedrooms, 11 bathrooms, a 54ft pool lined with 1,000 mosaic tiles and 24-carat gold, frescoes, statues and an open-air courtyard. *Hamptons International in association with Coldwell Banker; 020 7285 6585, hamptons.com*



Steve Parsons/PA, Dominic O'Neill

Goldsmith decided to sell his Devon home after splitting up with his wife, Sheherazade

on

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Ayrshire £425,000

Ecclesiastical types might enjoy life at Four Seasons, in the village of Crookedholm: built in 1875, the five-bedroom home was once a church, and retains stained-glass, high ceilings and choir stalls. It now has an indoor pool, too. Kilmarnock is two miles away. *Agent: Savills; 0141 222 5875, savills.co.uk*
They say: a magnificent church conversion
We say: it still feels very church-like



Lancashire £635,000

The Stables is set in a cobbled courtyard adjacent to Browsholme Hall, in the Ribbles Valley. The 3,185 sq ft property has four bedrooms and a converted barn. *Agent: MSW Hewetsons; 01200 424142, mswhewetsons.co.uk*
They say: a fabulous family home in a magnificent setting
We say: the price has been reduced from £685,000

Time and place Cerys Matthews

Before I was a rock star, I ran wild in my Welsh jungle

When I was a teenager, my bedrooms in our house in Swansea was like a jungle. It was full of plants, and I loved growing things. I had Tupperware dishes everywhere full of green shoots, lots of succulents, which produced little baby plants, and bags of compost and soil. There must have been a lot of oxygen in that room. I loved botany at school and had a great biology teacher, Mrs Ellis. My parents were understanding — I think I'm much stricter with my three children.

There were four of us — my sister, Rhianon, is a couple of years older, and I've got two younger brothers, Richard and Owen. The house had three bedrooms and a box room, so I had to share my bedroom with my sister, which I didn't like much. The plants acted as a sort of wall between us. I didn't have pets, I had my plants instead, though I once had a tree frog that I kept in a jar.

I was also really into music by then, and had a huge collection of instruments. I collected recorders — I was obsessed with them. I also had a guitar, which I taught myself to play, and I had oboe and piano lessons. I was taught piano by a strange fellow down the road who wore a red velvet dressing gown.

We had a piano downstairs that my grandfather had given me. The stool had loads of old music inside, songs like Yes! We Have No Bananas. We were taught traditional Welsh folk songs at school, which I really got into.

We had moved to Swansea from Cardiff when I was about seven. I liked our old house, so I resented the Swansea one at first, though there was nothing wrong with it. It was a detached suburban house and had a big garden with an apple tree and a huge stone that would warm up in the sun. I grew stuff in the garden, like potatoes and rhubarb. Best of all were the woods that the garden led into — we would meet up with the other local children in there, then run around and have adventures. We picked hazelnuts and there was wild garlic and all sorts of fungi.

We were quite adventurous inside the house as well. The four of us would have competitions to see who could jump off the highest step on the staircase. We would climb up the outside of the stairs, which was part of the fun. Richard usually won.

My family weren't particularly musical. My father was a surgeon, a tendon expert, and there would often be bits of animals in the freezer. I tried to grow a chicken's foot in our bathroom cabinet when I was about eight. My mother found it and threw it out — it stank.

I live in west London now and only have a tiny garden, though with three children and all my projects, I wouldn't have time to grow anything. I do want my kids to experience the freedom and wildness that I had when I was growing up. They get some of that when we stay at my parents' place. They have a farm in Pembrokeshire, and we go blackberry-picking and foraging. I like to teach them about what's growing, such as what's edible and what isn't.

If I hadn't become a musician, I think I might have been a botanist or a gardener. I even had a gardening column in Time Out magazine when I was with my band, Catatonia. Understanding how plants grow gives you respect for life.

Interview by Cherry Maslin

© Cerys Matthews performs at the Hippodrome, London WC2, from Wednesday until Saturday; her British Candlelight tour starts on December 7. Her Christmas album, *Baby It's Cold Outside*, is released tomorrow



The singer and DJ Cerys Matthews, 43, recalls high times in the woods behind her Swansea home
Carol Cattaneo/PA

