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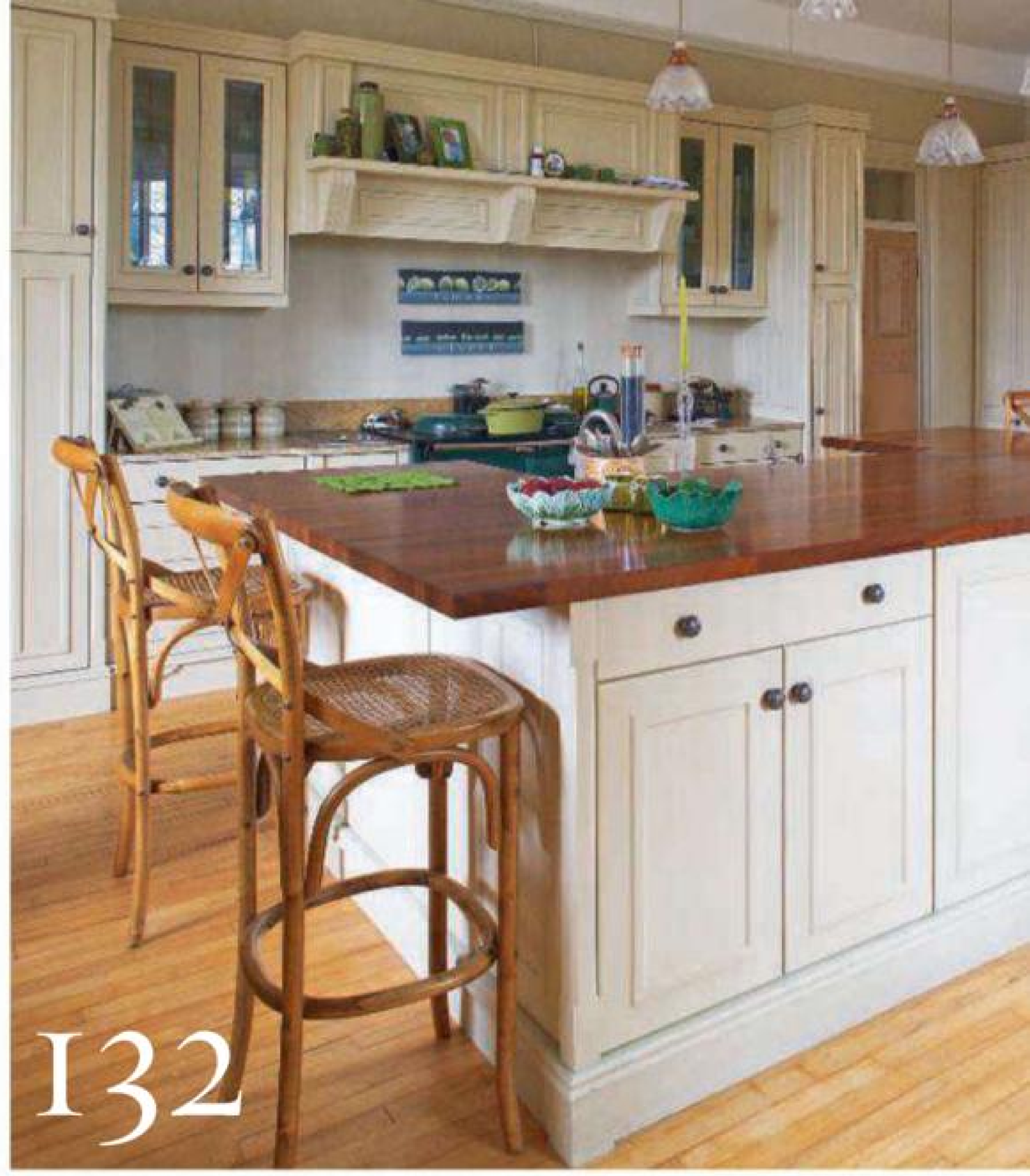

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STOCKIST INFORMATION
Visit ipcmedia.com magazines/25homes to find a newsagent near you.
Vol 15 No 1 ISSN 1369-5290

© IPC SouthBank, 2012.
Distributed by Marketforce (UK) Ltd, Blue Fin Building, 110 Southwark Street, London SE1 0SU (020 3148 5000)

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WELCOME...

The festive season is the longest, single period of time I spend at home. For the rest of the year, I'm busy commuting back and forth during the week, although I do treasure the odd days I don't have to go into the office. Even then, I usually spend this precious time sorting out the filing or doing small jobs that are purely cosmetic. Christmas and the New Year is very different, however, as it's all about relaxing and entertaining. This year, the family is coming to eat round at our house and the men have said it's their turn to do the cooking. I'm not convinced that our kitchen will survive the onslaught of my husband, brother, brother-in-law and two sons, but we shall see... If it goes to plan, that should be one of my days to really relax. But with all that time on my hands, I hope my mind doesn't start to wander and dream up a New Year's resolution. I don't think I've ever kept one to the point of achieving anything substantial, though I am quite good at sticking to my ambitions, and, on past experience, I've managed to see most of them through. One of the key ones for 2012 is to make sure I find the time to work with my friend on her allotment – the perfect way to spend those odd free days throughout the coming year. Wishing you all the best for 2012.

Deborah

DEBORAH BARKER, EDITOR IN CHIEF

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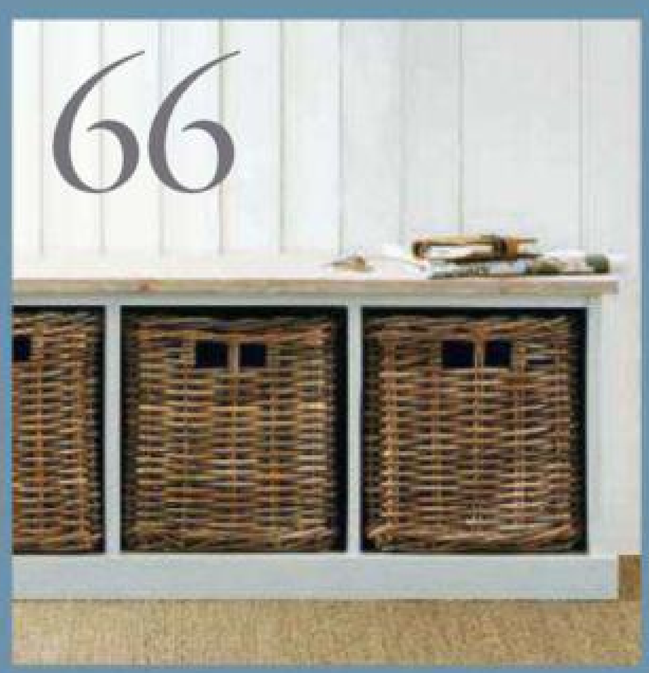
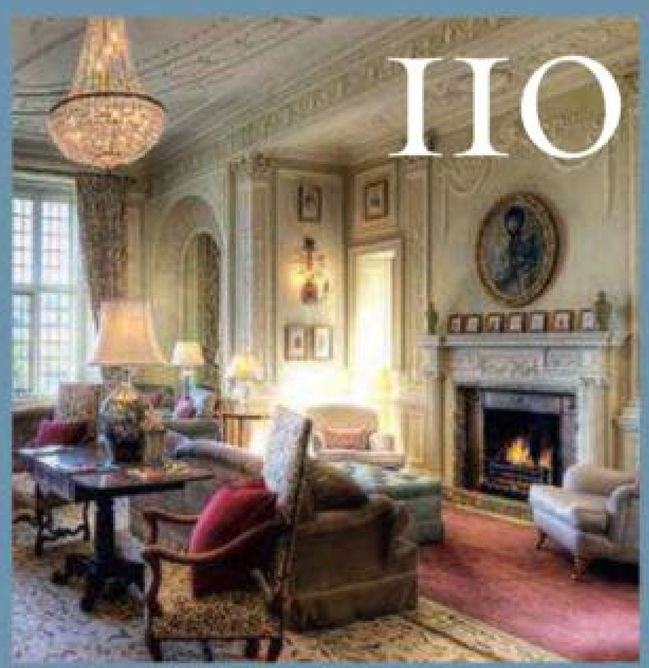


READER OFFER
Keep your home tidy with this storage bench



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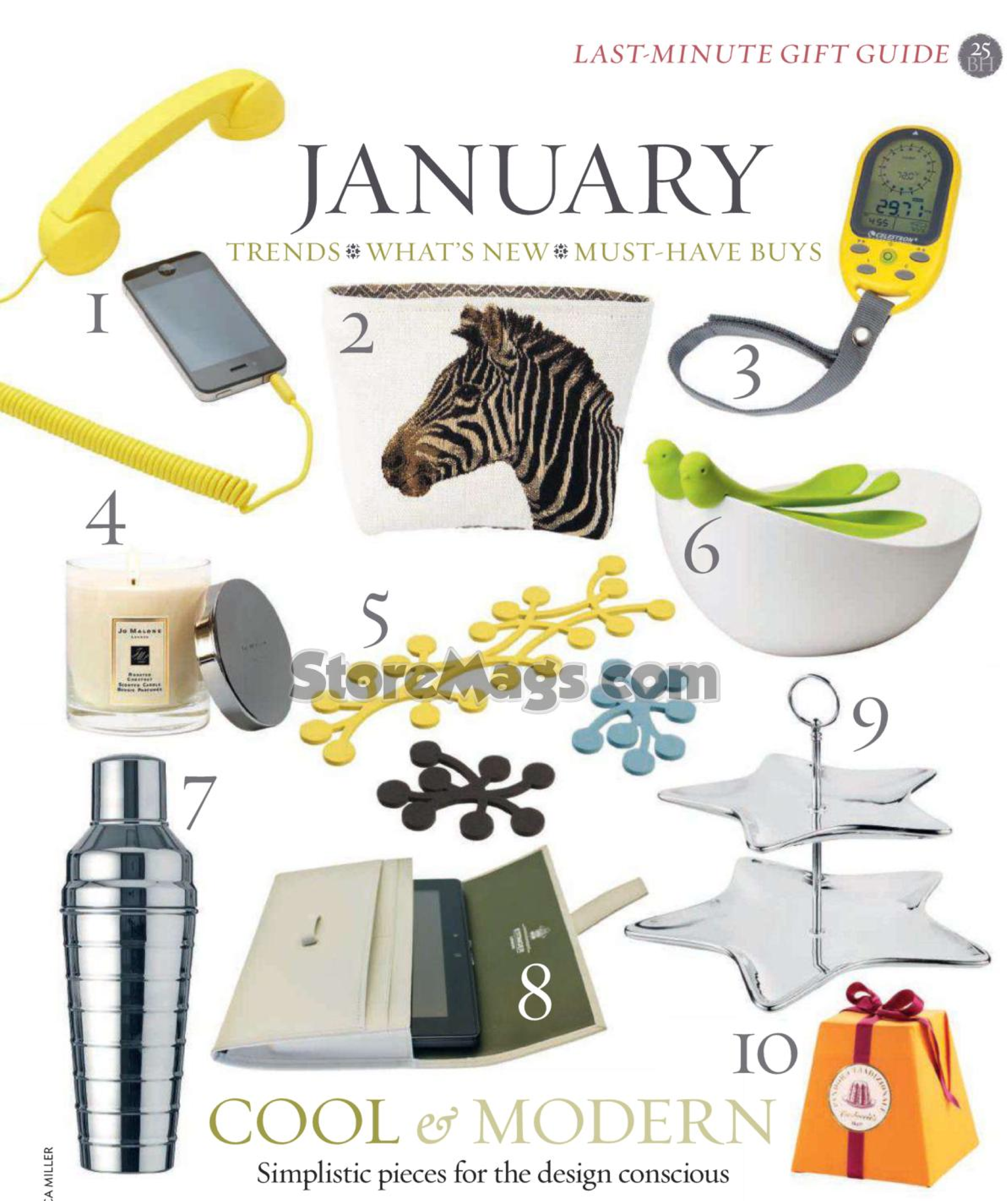

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COOL & MODERN

Simplistic pieces for the design conscious

COMPILED BY ERICA MILLER

1 HIP HANDSET
Moshi Moshi Pop Phone, £24.99, The Conran Shop.

2 MODERN COLONIAL
Sokonala small tote in white, £35, Iosis at Yves Delorme.

3 POLE POSITION
Trek Guide digital compass, £39.99, Presents for Men.

4 AFTER DARK
Roasted Chestnut deluxe candle, £80, Jo Malone.

5 NORDIC COOL
Marja table mats in wool felt, from £9 for a pot stand, Nordic Design.

6 BIRD IN HAND
Bird salad bowl and servers, £29.95, Rockett St George.

7 SHINING EXAMPLE
Autograph cocktail shaker, £15, Marks & Spencer.

8 LUXE LEATHER
Blackberry Playbook Case, £266, Ettinger.

9 RISING STARS
Silver star cake stand, £18, Bhs.

10 TALKING ITALIAN
Pandoro cake, £16.95, Carluccio's.

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TRAD & VINTAGE

Timeless, elegant and feminine

1 FLORAL FANCY
Celia Birtwell Pretty Woman watering can, £34.95, Wild & Wolf.
2 HOME TWEET HOME
Four Seasons birdhouse, £99.95, Sparrow & Finch.
3 FRAGRANT TOUCH
Yngaren scent bottles, £7.29 for a set of three, Ikea.
4 BEDSIDE STORY
Wild Flowers hand-knitted hot-water bottle in amethyst merino wool, £40, Jane Withers at Seek & Adore.
5 DESIGNER STYLE
Chinoise box, £22.40, Matthew Williamson at Debenhams.
6 BRITISH MADE
Flora & Fauna cup and saucers by Julia Davey, £22.50 each, Highgrove Collection.
7 WARM WOOD
Wooden key cupboard, £17, Dobbies.
8 ENDURING APPEAL
Wik and Wolsoe Elf jug, £79, and bowl, £28, Heal's.
9 MAN'S BEST FRIEND
Carola Van Dyke Whippet cushion, £50, Mary Portas at House of Fraser.

FOR STOCKIST DETAILS GO TO PAGE 152

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YOUNG & YOUNG AT HEART

Fun-filled, novelty toys and gifts

1

2

1 WASH-DAY WONDERS
Sparrow **peg**, £8.99 for four, Firebox.com.

2 LIGHT FANTASTIC
Ostrich **table lamp**, £180, Rice at Pinks & Greens.

3 CLASSIC TOY
Skipper Balance **scooter**, £65.99, Wonder Wood Toys.

4 PERFECT PAIR
Gisela Graham Tea Party **bookends**, £12.95, Gifts From Handpicked.

5 GLACIAL CHIC
Kissing Polar Bears box **toiletry bag**, £14.50, Anorak.

6 QUIRKY PIECE
The Sergeant **pepper mill**, £10, Sainsbury's.

7 CHARM TO GO
Ava **lunch box**, £9, Belle & Boo.

8 SMALL CHANGE
Mushroom **money pot**, £3, Tiger Stores.

9 CANINE CUTIE
Patchwork sausage dog **keyring**, £5.95, Muji.

10 TICKET TO RIDE
Wooden **animal train**, £15.99, Miffy.

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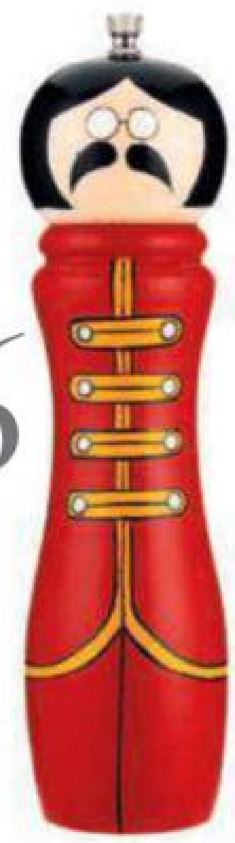

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Q&A

Decorating expert Rachel Leedham answers all your queries – this month, she tracks down a tribal rug and a velvet quilt

CANDLESTICK LAMPS

I recently saw a picture of a lovely sitting room, with lamps placed at each end of the fireplace mantel. I'd like to try something similar but haven't been able to find any lamps that aren't too big or chunky.

DENISE WILSON, BY EMAIL

Tall, slim lamps are perfect for narrow surfaces, such as a mantelpiece. Try the Egret lampbase by Oka (shown left, 0844 815 7380, okadirect.com) – it measures H62cm and is available in an antique black (shown), brass or chrome finish, from £79. The shade is sold separately – you'll probably need a smaller version of the one pictured. You might also like the very elegant Campbon candlestick (shown far left), H48cm, £640, from Vaughan (020 7349 4600, vaughandesigns.com). Again, it could be teamed with a smaller shade. Or, Frolic Lighting (0118 974 4305, froliclighting.com) sells a black, wooden bamboo-style lampbase, H36cm, £59.

CHAIR WALLPAPER

I'm redecorating our cloakroom and am looking to make a statement with traditional wallpaper decorated with images of chairs. Does such a design exist?

KAREN PULLEN, CHESHIRE

Small rooms, such as a cloakroom, are a good place to be experimental with wallpaper, as there won't be much else in the room to vie with the pattern. Also, you can go for a more expensive design as you shouldn't need too much of it. The Chairs wallpaper (shown right), by Barneby Gates (07713 483530, barneby gates.com), will give your cloakroom an opulent feel. It comes in two colourways and costs £78 per roll. Another suggestion, this time more French in feel, is the monochromatic Salon wallpaper (shown far right), by masters of classicism Timney Fowler. It costs £40.80 per roll and is distributed by Orchard Fabrics (0161 477 4225, timney-fowler.com).

VELVET QUILT

I loved the velvet quilt in Katja Bresson and Morten Rössel's Danish villa (p119, September 2011, shown left). Where did they buy it?

JANE CLEARY, BY EMAIL

Katja purchased the quilt from Day Home, the homewares branch of Danish fashion brand Day Birger et Mikkelsen (020 7432 8088, day.dk). The company no longer sells the exact quilt, but it has a Day Vintage Velvet quilt that comes in five beautiful muted colours, including a Shade of Blue version, which is probably the closest to the bedspread that was featured. It costs £320 and measures 240 x 260cm. You might also like the Cally velvet quilt by Sibona (020 8949 4882, sibona.com) that comes in Celadon, Twilight Mauve and Silver Blue (shown far left). It is available in two sizes: 240 x 240cm, £290, and 260 x 260cm sq, £325.

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TRIBAL RUG

I've been looking for a rug like the one pictured in Sophie Richard and Stuart Lochhead's bedroom (p101, October 2011, right) for a long time. Where can I find one like it?

HELEN ROWLEY, NOTTINGHAM

This lozenge-patterned rug is from the Beni Ouarain tribe in Morocco. Larusi (020 7428 0256, larusi.com) offers fine examples of these rugs, mostly from the 1960s and 1970s, and with prices ranging from £800 to £4,000. This 1.65 x 2.34m rug (shown right) is £850. The vintage rugs were woven on small, portable looms and rarely measure more than 2m wide, so Larusi now offers bespoke reproductions, which can be commissioned in wider sizes. Prices range between £450 and £550 per sq m.

RESTORING A MARBLE TABLE

My son was playing with a glow stick and unfortunately it leaked onto my white Carrera marble table, leaving a red stain. Can I restore this myself? A friend has suggested a poultice of hydrochloric acid – what do you think?

EMMA WITTEN, NORTH LONDON

David Harvey, founder of Marble Revivals (020 8361 9323, marble-revivals.co.uk), tells me that the stain will have burnt into the surface of the marble and chemicals such as hydrochloric acid will cause further damage. Your table will have to be professionally restored: the stained area needs to be sanded out, using specialist equipment, then the surface repolished. Marble Revivals would charge around £60 to £80 for this. The Conran Shop (0844 848 4000, conranshop.co.uk) sells a white, Saarinen marble-topped dining table (shown left) for £3,156.

RECYCLING SOLUTIONS

Our local council has reduced the collection services for recycling. To prevent rubbish building up in our kitchen, I moved it into the laundry room, but our dog made a huge mess of it. Ideally I'd like to have storage that I could fit into my existing kitchen. Can you help?

ANG SHERPA, BY EMAIL

Ysanne Brooks, editor of our sister publication *Beautiful Kitchens*, suggests using the space in one of your cupboards – the company that fitted your kitchen should have the best storage options. Ikea's (0845 358 3363, ikea.com) Rationell waste-sorting bins (shown right), £8.99 for three, fit into deep pan drawers. The Laundry Company's (01827 874100, laundrycompany.co.uk) Simplehuman Pull-out Duo recycling bins, which slide out of the cupboard on a track, cost £54.63. Or, stick to the utility room and try the Plastic Box Shop's (01845 574626, plasticboxshop.co.uk) Stacking Recycling Box, £28.59 for three, with, dog-proof lid flaps.

PHOTOGRAPHY ANDREAS MIKKEL/GLOTTI KRUSE & CO, DAVID STILL

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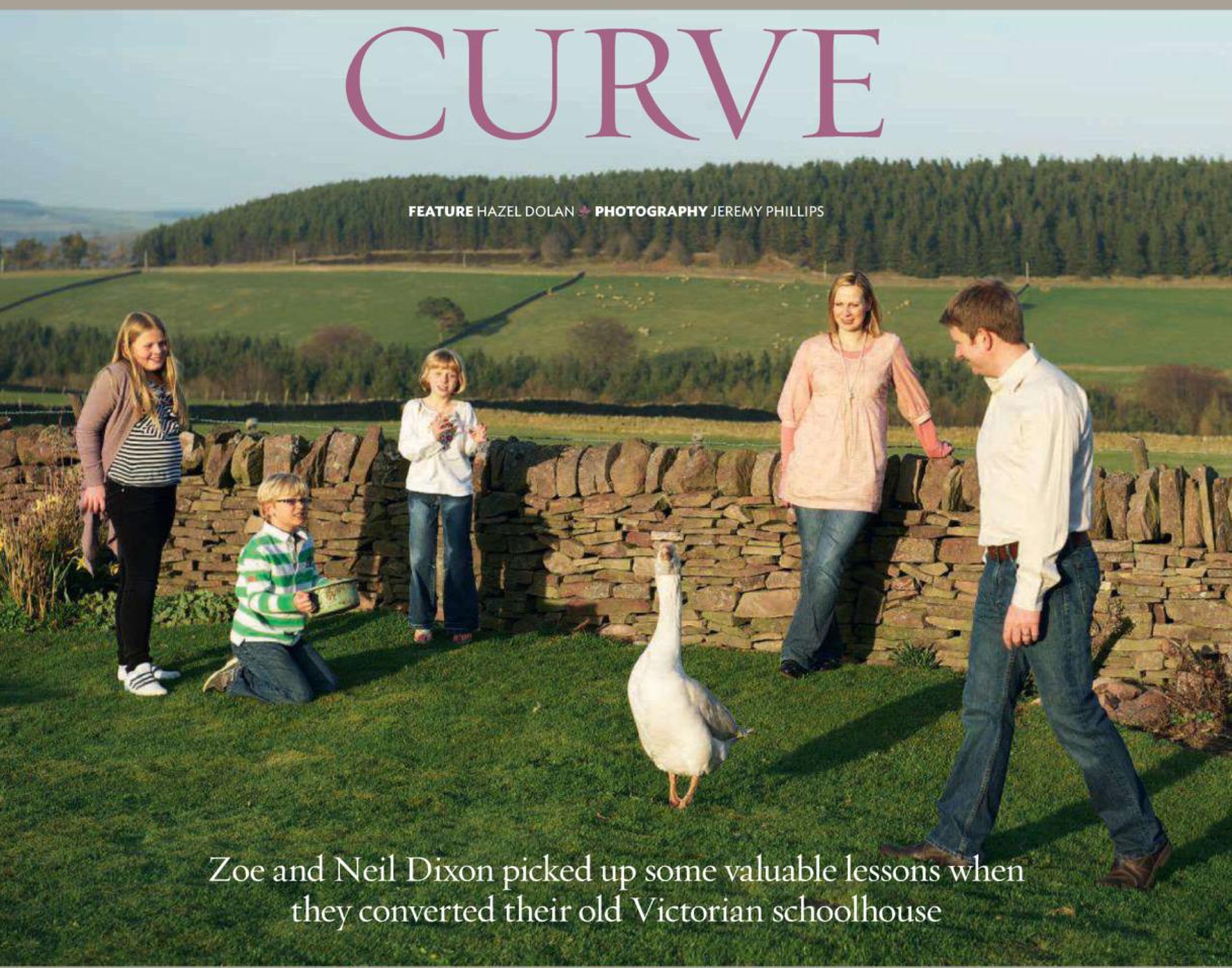
LEARNING CURVE

FEATURE HAZEL DOLAN ✤ **PHOTOGRAPHY** JEREMY PHILLIPS



Zoe and Neil Dixon picked up some valuable lessons when they converted their old Victorian schoolhouse

HOME TRUTHS

- **THE OWNERS** Zoe Dixon, a police officer, her husband Neil, a company director, and their children Amelia, Eleanor and Oliver, plus Meg the cat, Harold the goose, and Aylesbury ducks Jemima and Francesca
- **THEIR HOME** Grade II listed converted school, built in 1863
- **LOCATION** County Durham
- **ROOMS** Hall, sitting room, dining room, kitchen, study, snug, five bedrooms, bathroom, shower room
- **PURCHASED** 2007
- **PREVIOUS PROPERTY** 'Our first house was a stone, new-build bungalow in Northumberland,' says Zoe.

EXTERIOR
The Dixon's Grade II listed home was built by renowned 19th-century Gothic Revival architect Samuel Sanders Teulon as part of a model village

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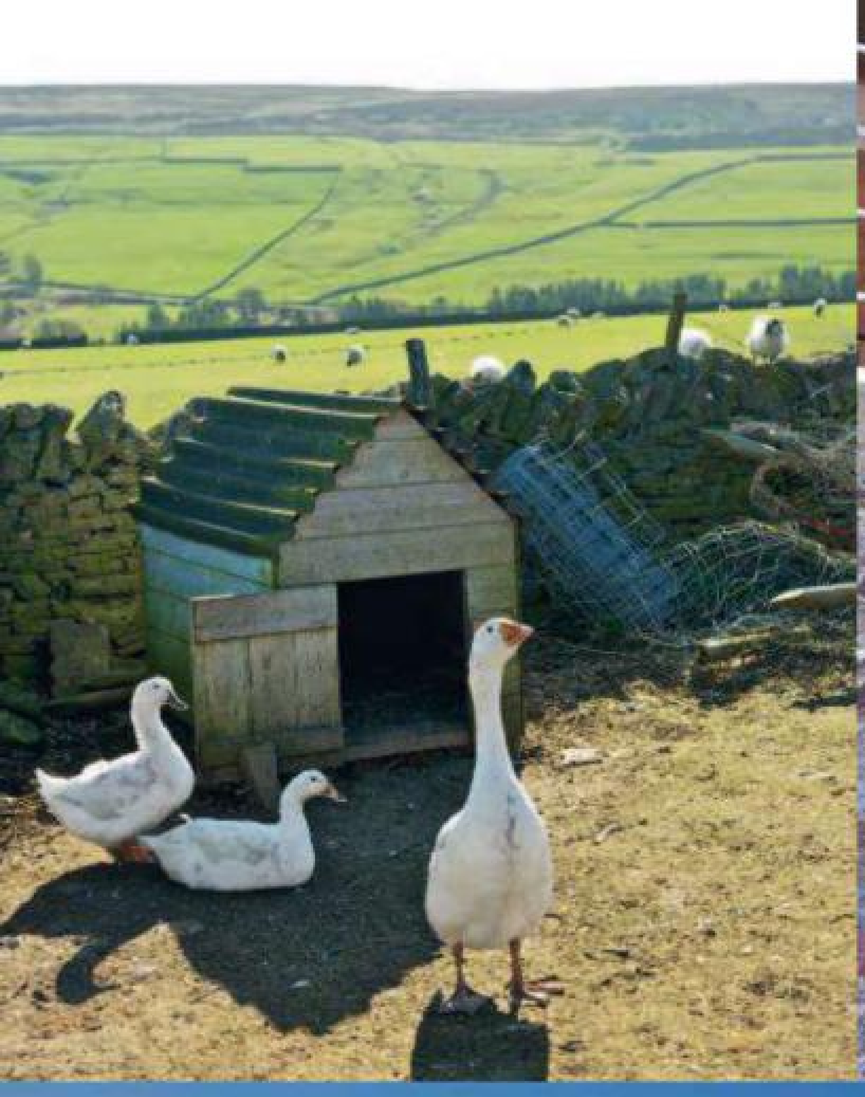

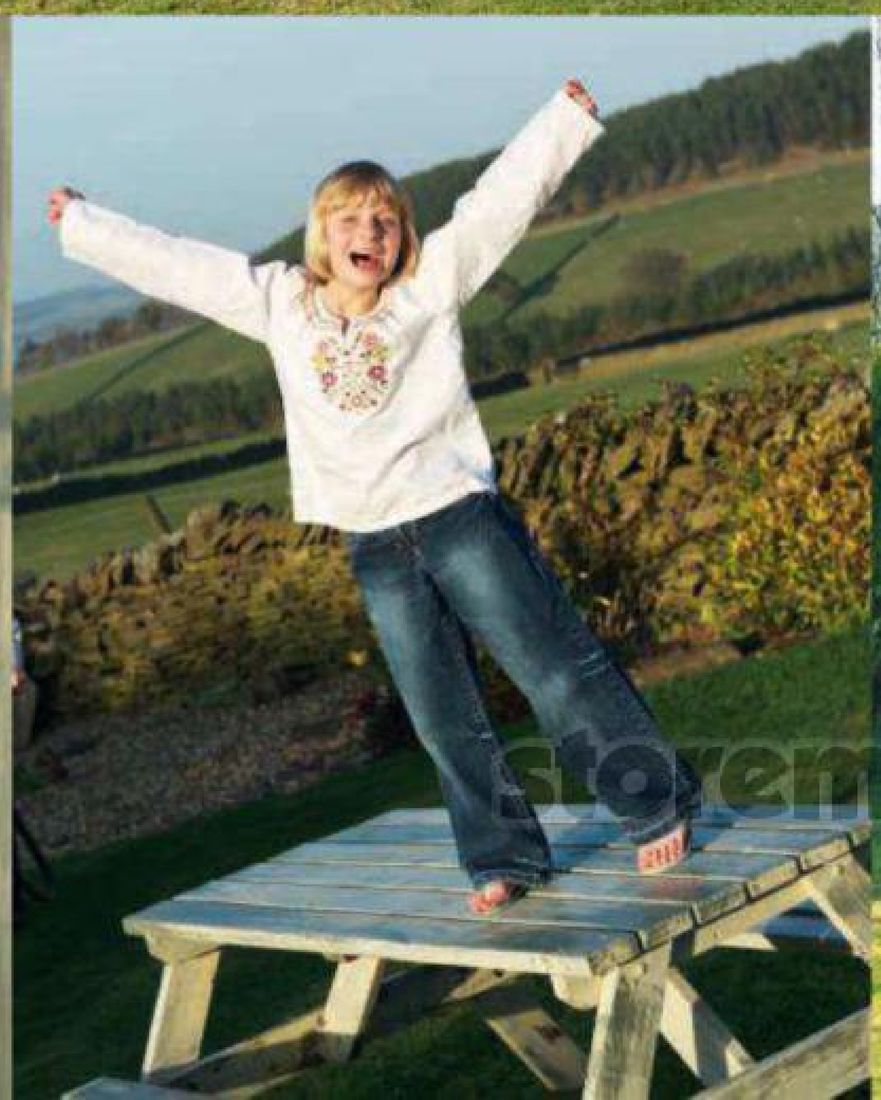

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DINING ROOM
Utilising space was a priority, so key pieces of furniture double up as extra storage. For a similar **blanket box**, try the Boston range, from £145, Purely Pine. The Elements vintage pine two-seat **monk bench**, £479.99, FurniturebyCSN, is comparable

DECORATING TIP 'Paint the walls in the same colour for a flowing look throughout the house'

DINING ROOM
'We've used black slate tiles in the open-plan space so that it flows nicely from one area to the other,' says Zoe. Lichfield sideboard, £699; Lichfield two-door top, £699, both Marks & Spencer. Fiddle chairs, £64 each; table, £470, both Border Pine. Rio black slate 30cm x 30cm tiles, £20 per sq m, The Tile Shed

SITTING ROOM

The house's exposed setting calls for rich textures and warm colours to create a welcoming interior. Walls painted in **Book Room Red** and **Slipper Satin** estate emulsions, both 29.50 for 2.5 litres, Farrow & Ball. For a similar **chandelier**, try the Italian wrought-iron 12-light, £780, Universal Lighting. The Stovax Huntingdon 40 woodburning **stove** is similar, from £1,265, Woodburner Warehouse. **Coffee table**, £399, Fat Giraffe

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KITCHEN
Zoe sourced a local cabinetmaker to fit the oak units and the Aga. Cabinetry, PWS. **Tumbled Travertine wall tiles**, from £35 per sq m, The Tile Shed

DINING AREA
Plenty of space meant a farmhouse -style table and chairs fit perfectly in the corner of the kitchen. Table, from £145, Border Pine. Similar **chairs** from UK Architectural Antiques, £95 each

FAVOURITE ITEM 'I love anything in tartan, particularly my comfy old desk chair, which is, of course, upholstered in red tartan'

STUDY
The antique desk, filing cabinet and chair all belonged to the school's previous owner. Alternatives are Irish Coast large **desk**, £1,695; three-drawer **filing cabinet**, £450; and **chair**, £350, all The Furniture Barn

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Zoe Dixon had always dreamt of living in the countryside. Long before her husband Neil was ready to make the leap and leave their Tyneside home, she was already searching for potential properties in Northumberland and County Durham. 'It took me a good five years to persuade Neil to even start looking out this way,' she admits. 'But once he saw this Victorian schoolhouse on the county border, he was just as enthusiastic as me.

'As soon as we viewed this property, I could see it had potential, even though it was stuck in a 1970s time warp of brown velvet curtains and shagpile carpet,' Zoe continues. 'The bath was on a raised platform with carpet surrounding it – and the only thing missing was a glitter ball!'

Luckily, the architecture of the former schoolhouse, its extensive garden and North Pennines view were all redeeming features, and the couple were in no doubt that it was the perfect home for them. 'We made an offer,' says Zoe, 'and unbelievably our own house was sold that very weekend.'

Built as a key element of the model village of Hunstanworth, created by Gothic revival architect Samuel Sanders Teulon, the school was already an attractive prospect. The couple, however, thought that the original 1970s conversion was unimaginative – ground-floor school rooms had been simply divided into large, square living areas, with bedrooms above. And the Dixons could see that it would have to be radically altered to complement a modern family life.

'We knew that it needed a lot of work but we didn't actually realise how much,' Zoe admits. 'One job led to another.' Their first task was to rid the main living space of its 1970s bar, which dominated the entrance. 'The bar was the pride and joy of the property's former owner, but the first weekend we moved in it had to go,' says Zoe. 'If Neil hadn't helped, he knew I'd have taken a sledgehammer to it ▶

MASTER BEDROOM
'I love colour – but colour is one tone,' says Zoe. 'With wallpaper, you have design – so you can totally transform a room.'
Similar pine panelled **bed**, from £649, from Pine Oak Furniture. **Wilton wallpaper**, £32 per roll, and **cushions**, both Laura Ashley

BATHROOM
'The bathroom fittings were brown,' says Zoe. 'It was originally a very dated scheme, so we ripped the whole thing out and started again.'
Bath, £658, at Heritage Bathroom; painted in **Red Earth** Estate Emulsion, £29.50 per 2.5 litres, Farrow & Ball. Similar Venetian-style **mirror**, £200, John Lewis

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myself.' Other features, however, were well worth keeping – the original arched windows and as much of the pitch pine flooring as was possible have all been carefully preserved.

Once the local listing officer had confirmed the couple could have free rein internally as long as the exterior remained untouched, renovation works could begin. The Dixons' priority was to reconfigure the space, finding new ways to divide the ground floor, with clear delineating kitchen, dining and sitting areas. 'It could have felt like a huge corridor if we hadn't split it carefully,' Zoe points out.

As well as completely redesigning the ground-floor layout, adding new partition walls and doorways, the couple also replumbed and refitted the bathroom and kitchen, swapped the horizontal stair railing with child-safe banisters, removed layers of Artex, and dry-lined, replastered and redecorated throughout. At the same time, they added a period fireplace in the bathroom and a new woodburner in the sitting room, undertaking most of the work themselves. It has taken three years to complete their family home. 'At times it felt like a bigger job than we expected,' Zoe concedes, 'and it cost a lot more than we thought.'

Each room has a key feature, usually a dominant piece of furniture, from the study's desk to the bathroom's roll-top bath, which clearly defines the space. Zoe has worked hard to make the interior cosy, choosing colours to blend with their surroundings, while introducing warmth and comfort. 'We're living in quite an exposed area,' she says. 'So we opted for autumnal reds and dusky colours. It's amazing how paint can change colour from one room to the next because of the light or the shape of space. We wanted similar shades to achieve a sense of continuity.'

Neil's practical skills and Zoe's talent for creating relaxed and welcoming interiors have transformed the old school. 'It's been a real labour of love and took a lot of hard work,' says Zoe, 'but it's definitely been worth it. We love living here.'

AMELIA'S BEDROOM
Country prints and patchwork in rose-pink shades make a pretty scheme. Abbeville floral wallpaper, £26 per roll; Newlyn quilt, £110, both Laura Ashley. Patchwork cushion, £16.50, Busy Bee Studio. Amelie double bedstead, £489, from Furniture Village is similar

LANDING
'Someone told me the upstairs landing feels like a ship – and it's true,' says Zoe. Walls painted in **Shaded White** estate emulsion, £29.50 for 2.5 litres, Farrow & Ball. **Abbotsford carpet**, £77.50 per sq m, Brintons

FOR STOCKISTS DETAILS GO TO PAGE 152

ENDLESS IDEAS FOR 2012

Step inside hundreds of gorgeous houses from previous issues of your favourite magazine at our dedicated new website, housetohome.co.uk/25beautifulhomes. You'll learn how to recreate the homeowner's look and you can save your favourite clips to an online scrapbook. Plus, the *25BH* team will keep you abreast of the latest trends and best buys.

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'WE WERE DESTINED TO LOOK AFTER THIS beautiful house'

Writers Charlotte Bingham and Terence Brady find all the inspiration they need in their delightful West Country residence

FEATURE BEVERLEY BYRNE ✤ **PHOTOGRAPHY** COLIN POOLE

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HOME TRUTHS

THE OWNERS Charlotte Bingham, who is a novelist, and her husband Terence Brady, an actor, playwright, musician and artist, plus Bertie the pug, Dickon the Tibetan Terrier and Wilkie the Polish Lowland Sheepdog
THEIR HOME Georgian rectory, built in 1710
LOCATION Somerset
ROOMS Hall, drawing room, sitting room, dining room, kitchen/breakfast room, study, TV room, conservatory, five bedrooms, two bathrooms, plus an adjoining coach house, cottage and studio
PURCHASED 1982
PREVIOUS PROPERTY 'We moved here from London,' says Charlotte.

DRAWING ROOM
'We're rather fussy about our sofas,' says Charlotte. 'They have to be large and comfortable, and the fabric should be fairly classical in design.'
The Duresta Buttermere, £1,399, Dodge's of Sherborne, is similar to this pair of sofas

FIREPLACE
'Jøtul woodburning stoves are incredibly efficient and the period style really suits this setting,' says Charlotte.
F400 stove in Ivory, £1,315, Jøtul

DRAWING ROOM
The wing chair makes a great spot for reading a book, of which many are available in this house.
Tetrad's Peter chair, £1,059 (including footstool), Barker & Stonehouse, has this look

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HALL
An original Gothic stone doorway leads into a spacious reception area. Driscolls Antiques sells similar pedestal tables, from £1,250

Many dream of escaping to the country, but the story of how Charlotte Bingham and her husband Terence Brady found their Somerset retreat might have come straight from the pages of a novel, as Charlotte explains...

KITCHEN
The Aga was instrumental in helping the house to dry out after the couple moved in. Two-oven Aga, from £2,500. Garden Trading stocks an identical Fresh Vegetables bucket in Apple Green, £18

How did you first discover this place?
More than 40 years ago, we were involved in filming a documentary at a well-known 18th-century landscaped garden just across the county border in Wiltshire. The surrounding countryside was captivating and as Terence and I drove round, peering over garden walls and hedges, an old rectory took our fancy. We imagined what it might be like to live there but at that time, our hectic lifestyle in London prevented the dream from becoming a reality.

What were you doing in the city?
We were both writers. I published my first novel in 1963, which did very well. When I met Terence he was an actor, but after we married we became writing partners and worked on many successful TV shows and books. So we inevitably found ourselves travelling around the world, particularly in America, where one of our TV series was a huge hit.

One day, we were flying back from the States when Terence mooted the idea of moving to the countryside. On arriving home, we contacted an estate agent and, to our delight, he sent us details of an early 18th-century rectory. You can imagine how amazed we were to discover it was the very same house we'd adored all those years before. We drove straight down and put in an offer on the spot.

Did the rectory need much work?
Not really, but we still wanted to put our stamp on the place. We weren't in a hurry, though, as I believe period properties reveal the best use of their space over time. For example, at first ▶

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KITCHEN/ BREAKFAST ROOM

The cabinetry and plate racks with oak splashback and worksurfaces were crafted by a local joiner. Units painted in Farrow & Ball's **New White** eggshell, £43.50 for 2.5 litres. **Butler sink**, £268, Wickes. For a similar **table**, take a look at Old Charm's Lambourne design, from £1,190

FAVOURITE ITEM 'This dresser displays a collection of Rye Pottery plates commemorating every TV series and theatre production written by Terence and myself'

VIEW TO TV ROOM

The vintage dresser was in situ when the couple took over the house. The Burlington **dresser**, £1,200, New England Lifestyle, is a match. For a similar **sofa** upholstered in striped fabric, take a look at the Sorrento, £1,200, John Lewis

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DINING ROOM
Charlotte chose pale pink for the walls to complement her china, which is French 18th century and was inherited from her grandparents. The portraits are also of Charlotte's ancestors. Walls painted in **Parlour Rose** emulsion, £32.50 for 2.5 litres, from Fired Earth's National Trust Collection. The Chair Set sells Chippendale-style **seating**; a set of eight Victorian mahogany designs currently in stock is priced at £5,900

LANDING
The portrait of Charlotte in her twenties adds a colourful touch to the scheme. Terence bought the Georgian **seat** at auction; Mallett deals in fine 18th-century antiques like this one

we used the room adjacent to the kitchen purely for dining. However, it soon became apparent that this approach didn't suit the house. As it was located next to the kitchen, the room was noisy and prone to harbouring cooking smells. So within six months we turned it into a TV room. Since then, the classic Georgian drawing room has proved to be perfect space for entertaining.

What about the decor – are you a fan of traditional country colours?
When it came to painting this place, I was worried I might make some momentous mistakes, as taking on a home with history can be quite nerve wracking. Because the rectory's ceilings aren't very high, I felt that restrained shades would enhance the sense of space and light. Also, as Terence and I share a passion for art, we didn't want the schemes to overpower our collection. So we decided to restrict the palette to pastels.

The colours work well with your furniture – what can you tell us about these pieces?
Some of my earliest memories are of my paternal grandparent's home, Bangor Castle in Northern Ireland. The house,

FOR STOCKIST DETAILS **GO TO PAGE 152**

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built in grand, Victorian Gothic style, was full of old furniture and ancestral paintings, many of which we've been fortunate to have inherited. It's not surprising that many of my novels seem to be set in large houses with plenty of antiques and ancestral portraits!

The rectory certainly doesn't seem stuffy – how do you keep it looking so homely?
All we want is for our family and friends to feel totally at ease here. I'm a great believer in domestic bliss and enjoy creating a cosy atmosphere. Even though Terence and I are mostly on our own, we still use every room. But the place really comes alive when our two children come to stay with their youngsters.

Would you say this is your forever house?
I often find myself thinking about the people who might have lived here in the past. Certain aspects of the house, in particular, the garden and the local landscape, seem to work their way into my novels. I believe we were destined to look after this beautiful home, and I really can't see us living anywhere else.

EN SUITE
The bathroom sink is set into a piece of marble, which was found in the house and dates from the time it was built. Thomas Crapper is a good source of high-level china **cisterns**, £595, including fittings

MASTER BEDROOM
The couple's elegant four-poster makes a grand focal point. Anderson Bradshaw's Queen Anne-style **four-poster**, from £610, would not look out of place here. Walls painted in **Saltram** emulsion, £32.50 for 2.5 litres, the National Trust Paint Collection at Fired Earth

BIG EASY

Once the flood waters had receded from New Orleans, Kimberly and Clint Szubinski created a cosy family home

FEATURE ANTHEA GERRIE ✤ **PHOTOGRAPHY** SARA ESSEX BRADLEY

FAMILY ROOM
'We continued the white scheme by washing the oak floorboards several times with diluted paint, then sanding them to achieve a distressed look,' says Kimberly. The seating is covered in Essential Collection **bedlinen**, from £10 a sheet, Pottery Barn. Ikea's Ektorp **sofa** is similar, £229 for a two-seater. **Belgian linen curtains**, £95 per panel, Restoration Hardware. **Surya rug**, £360, Eclectic Home

HOME TRUTHS

- **THE OWNERS** Kimberly Szubinski, who is an interior designer, her husband Clint, a property developer, and their children Kyla, Tate, Liam and Aiden
- **THEIR HOME** Spanish Revival house
- **LOCATION** New Orleans
- **ROOMS** Sitting room, dining room, kitchen/breakfast room, family room, utility room, office/playroom, four bedrooms (one en suite), two bathrooms
- **PURCHASED** 2008
- **PREVIOUS PROPERTY** 'Prior to this, we lived in a house on the same street,' says Kimberly.

Sotheby's

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Experienced renovators they may be, but when Kimberly and Clint Szubinski took on their latest home in Louisiana, even this intrepid pair must have paused for thought. The Spanish Revival property, in a flood-ravaged part of New Orleans, had a palm tree embedded in the roof, while the interior was inhabited by raccoons. 'There wasn't even a floor, so we had to stand on joists to look around,' remembers Kimberly.

However, the villa's Spanish-style features made the place irresistible. 'Underneath the debris was a split-level building,' Kimberly says. 'We could see the vista was framed by openings, where sets of French windows had once stood before being blown out by Hurricane Katrina.'

And it was this very same storm that caused the couple to move house. 'We were evacuated ▶

KITCHEN/BREAKFAST ROOM

Kimberly designed the Shaker-style cabinetry with egg-and-dart detailing and tongue-and-groove panelling. 'I chose Carrara marble for the worktops, in keeping with the classic, New Orleans look,' she explains.
For Shaker-style **cabinetry**, try Sola Kitchens. **Chair**, price on request, Rachel Ashwell at Shabby Chic. **Acanthus-leaf side table**, around £300, Aiden Gray

DINING ROOM

Whitewashed floors, covered chairs and pale-painted surfaces add layers of texture to a monochrome scheme. To recreate the look of Kimberly's **dining suite**, try teaming the Stola table in Lichen Grey, £1,690, with Carmargue chairs in Linen Grey, £144 each, all Oka

SHOPPING IDEAS

ELEGANT DINING CHAIRS

Eichholtz Devonshire in off-white linen, £450, Occa-Home

Louis XVI Medallion chair, £660 plus fabric, Oficina Inglesa

Waxed-oak rattan chair, £314, Sweetpea & Willow

Storm Interior

FOR STOCKIST DETAILS GO TO PAGE 152

from our old home, and when it came time to return, the damage meant we had no house to come back to,' explains Kimberly. 'We moved around a bit, but when I became pregnant for a third time, it was time to buy a larger house.'

It was then that the couple turned their attention to the villa. Within six months, the family were ready to move in. 'There was no hot water and construction was going on all around us,' says Kimberly. 'It was a hectic time.'

Despite the chaos, Kimberly and Clint have transformed the house into a calm, serene space. 'I love the simplicity of using white as a backdrop,' explains Kimberly. 'I have a tendency to use lots of crystal chandeliers and mirrors, with big French windows. I also use white to reflect any natural light around the rooms. I know it may seem an impractical colour choice, but making sure you choose items with wipeable surfaces is the key to keeping a pale home clean, especially with multiple children in tow!'

BATHROOM
Among the delightful finds the couple made were the porthole window and chandelier: 'Both are original to the house,' says Kimberly. Freestanding **bath**, £1,600, including fittings, the Elizabethan Classics range at World Imports. **Chair**, price on request, Rachel Ashwell at Shabby Chic

MASTER BEDROOM
The bed was a gift to the couple, as was the chandelier, bought by a friend in a garage sale: 'So all we had to do was to splash out on a few accessories,' says Kimberly. **Le Grey candlestick**, £230, Aiden Gray. **Mirrored dressing table**, Pier One Imports; the company's Heyworth design costs £112. For fine mahogany **wardrobes** like this one, visit Quayside Antiques; expect to pay around £750

FAVOURITE ROOM

'Our master suite – it's where I sneak away from the children to read a book, and the one place in the house that stays neat and tidy!'

The couple both have a passion for salvage, and they admit to having more than one relic of their previous homes worked into their new design, including old doors and mirrors. 'Scratches, stains and dents all add character to a house,' says Kimberly, pointing out a cockeyed bit of crystal on a chandelier that bore the brunt of an earlier indoor game of football. 'I think they show that a place has been lived in.

'A property develops a pretty patina over time,' she muses. 'There will always be something left to do here, because it's a real family home.'

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CALM WATERS

Ann-Marie and Nigel Doyle's restful apartment enjoys uninterrupted views across an idyllic stretch of the Thames

FEATURE MAGGIE COLVIN ✤ **PHOTOGRAPHY** NICHOLAS YARSLEY

DINING HALL
Sarah Finney installed the limestone fireplace to match the width of the chimney breast. **Limestone fireplace**, £3,145, Wimbledon Fireplaces, designed by Sarah Finney. **Antique French chairs** upholstered in leopard-print fabric, £350 each; **mirror**, £595, all Vertu Antiques & Interiors

SITTING ROOM
Positioned next to the dining area, the chaise is a great spot to relax with a good book. **Chaise longue**, £1,850, Vertu Antiques & Interiors. **Ivory butterfly cushions**, £65 each, India Jane

Having worked in the Venetian property market for more than 25 years, it is no surprise to learn that Ann-Marie Doyle has a love of buildings located by the water. And although she may not be able to see the Rialto bridge from the apartment she shares with her husband Nigel in southwest London, the views up and down the Thames are just as impressive.

'I spend a lot of my time in Italy, so I needed somewhere within easy access of the airport,' explains Ann-Marie. 'The location here is ideal, being quiet yet still enjoying excellent transport links. As I'm away a lot, it was also important that my home is easy to clean and maintain. This place has just the right number of bedrooms for the family – our daughters Gaby and Madeline are students, but often come back to stay – and the size and layout of the reception areas is perfect for entertaining. Plus, we have the marvellous, uninterrupted views of the river.'

The Victorian apartment was in excellent condition when Ann-Marie and Nigel made the flat theirs. Apart from two fireplaces ▶

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HOME TRUTHS

- **THE OWNERS** Ann-Marie Doyle, a property consultant, her husband Nigel, who is a lawyer, and their daughters Gaby and Madeline
- **THEIR HOME** Apartment within a Victorian mansion block
- **LOCATION** Southwest London
- **ROOMS** Dining hall, sitting/dining room, kitchen, family room, cloakroom, three bedrooms, bathroom
- **PURCHASED** 2010
- **PREVIOUS PROPERTY** 'Before we moved here, we rented a large detached house in west London,' says Ann-Marie.

SITTING ROOM

'If you own an antique tray, such as this black-and-gold one, try hanging it on the wall as a work of art,' Ann-Marie suggests. Sofa, Graham & Green; its Dream Velvet collection, £2,295 for a three-seater, has this look. Armchair, £950, Vertu Antiques & Interiors. Lara ottoman, from £499, Oka

INSPIRATION

'I spend a lot of time in Venetian palazzos, which are often dressed in an overly elaborate style, but I like my own home to look subdued, calm and understated'

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DINING AREA
'Each morning, Nigel and I sit here to have breakfast, while enjoying the river views outside the window,' says Ann-Marie. Driscolls Antiques currently stocks a similar Regency mahogany **breakfast table**, £1,250

FAMILY ROOM
A selection of iconic pieces are grouped together. **Danish coffee table**, £460, Vertu Antiques & Interiors. **Arc floor lamp**, £450, The Old Cinema. Knoll International's Mies van der Rohe **Barcelona chair**, £4,470, is from The Conran Shop

that had been boarded up, the rest of the original features – including cornices, ceiling roses and sash windows – were all intact. 'It offered a fine canvas on which we could put our work,' Ann-Marie enthuses.

Employing the expertise of local designer Sarah Finney, Ann-Marie gave the interior a modern makeover. The bathroom was divided in two, with one part becoming an en-suite shower room and the other a separate WC. The kitchen was also upgraded, with the ceiling being lowered in order to install recessed spotlights. At the same time, Sarah designed and fitted a new limestone mantelpiece for the fireplace in the dining hall and also removed the dated 1960s glass-panelled doors throughout the flat.

'In their place, we put in panelled versions extending to the full height of the rooms,' says Ann-Marie. 'They're

SHOPPING IDEAS
CONTEMPORARY PENDANT LIGHTS

Flos K Tribe S2 light in Silver, £334, Amara

Aurora pendant light, £200, Bhs

Copper ball pendant light, £310, Heal's

KITCHEN
White marble worktops and mirrored splashbacks increase the feeling of light and space. Bespoke stained-oak **cabinetry**, £25,000, designed and supplied by Andrew Hall at Woodstock Furniture. Leather **bar stool**, £98.50, Atlantic Shopping. **Kartell FL/Y suspension lamp**, £149, Graham & Green

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MASTER BEDROOM
This soft lilac scheme creates a restful air. For a comparable **floral cushion**, take a look at Designers Guild's Rosenholm, £75. Laura Ashley sells similar **bedspreads**; its Heather Purple Embroidered Dot quilt costs £105

LAST WORD
'My sister Angela owns an antiques shop and is a great source of advice – I can call her at any time of the day and she seems to come up with an instant solution'

the sort of designs you would find in 18th-century European mansions.'

Like many period apartments, the Doyles' home is built around a central stairwell, so the nearest room to the front door – the dining hall – seemed rather gloomy. 'We installed a huge 6ft mirror on one wall to enhance the feeling of light,' Ann-Marie explains. 'As a result, what was once the weak spot of the apartment has been turned into my favourite space.'

The couple also created a more informal dining area in the bay window of the sitting room. 'Nigel and I love to sit here and gaze up and down the river,' says Ann-Marie. 'There's always something to watch – rowing boats, canal boats and lots of passing canoes.'

With the pair having acquired their own mooring and a boat, it's clear that riverside living suits the Doyles. 'Being here is special,' says Ann-Marie. 'It's the perfect retreat.'

MASTER EN SUITE
A mirrored wall adds to the illusion of space in this wet room. **Neutra wall tiles** in **Blanco** and **Tortora**, £76.75 per sq m, World's End Tiles. The Alpine 600 washbasin and freestanding vanity unit, £299, Bathstore, is a good match for this **sanitaryware** and bathroom **furniture**

GABY'S BEDROOM
Based on a combination of pink and taupe, the colour scheme here is centred around a Kashmir hanging that Ann-Marie bought in Paris. Find a similar upholstered **headboard**, from £415, Oka. Bhs has a selection of glass-base **lamps** and patterned **shades**

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HOME TRUTHS

- **THE OWNERS** Marjorie Buiskool, a boutique owner, her husband Steve, an IT director, and their sons Adam and Charlie, plus Weimaraners' Holly and Bubbles
- **THEIR HOME** A Georgian mill and Jacobean cottage, linked to former Georgian stable blocks by a modern extension
- **LOCATION** Worcestershire
- **ROOMS** Hall, drawing room, sitting room, kitchen-diner, media room, music room, utility room, four bedrooms (all en suite), dressing room, guest cloakroom
- **PURCHASED** 2006
- **PREVIOUS PROPERTY** 'We lived in a Grade II listed, half-timbered farmhouse in Worcestershire,' says Marjorie.

JOINED UP THINKING

When Marjorie and Steve Buiskool bought their charming mill and adjoining stables, it seemed only logical to turn the two buildings into one spacious home

FEATURE VICTORIA JENKINS **PHOTOGRAPHY** WILLIAM GODDARD

SITTING ROOM
Marjorie chose contemporary leopard-print fabric as an eye-catching statement for the Jacobean core of the house.
For **leopard-print fabric** to cover your sofa, try Ocelot, £92 per metre, Zoffany. Glass coffee **table**, £180, Francis of Malvern

HALL
The African coconut-shell mask was sourced from a local antiques shop.
Try Tribalgatheringlondon.com for tribal **masks** and artefacts. Pennant **flagstone floor**, £64 per sq m, Classical Flagstones. Jacobean-style **coffer**, price on application, Titchmarsh & Goodwin

DRAWING ROOM
The walls were originally exposed brick, but the Buiskools felt that plastering over them would warm up the room.
Wool **carpet**, £60 per sq m, Brintons. Try Westland London for a similar antique **mantel** (9413), price on application, Westland London

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INSIGHT USING ORIGINAL FEATURES

Nothing beats the rustic charm of exposed timber beams. If you want to draw attention to them, cream or white walls will help. To maintain them, avoid excessive moisture and direct sunlight. Dust them and stain with oil from time to time, to preserve the wood.

The windows and doors are the eyes of a building and of all the external features, they matter the most. If you need to replace doors or colourful stained-glass windows, first research the style required to fit in with your period home.

For listed properties, you must apply for listed building consent before making any changes. Contact your local authority if in doubt.

The house that Marjorie and Steve Buiskool bought in Worcestershire five years ago caught their eye because of its unusual layout. Originally a black-and-white Jacobean cottage, it later had a Georgian mill added on to it, while a separate Georgian stable block nearby provided more useful space. The couple knew that with some clever planning, they could dramatically increase the footprint of their wonderful new property.

'At first, it was the location that attracted us,' says Marjorie. 'The building was situated on a mill stream and its mill wheel was still in working order up to 30 years ago. As was all the old wooden machinery, which is now in our drawing room. The property came with 13 acres of open meadow, but while set deep in the countryside, it nevertheless wasn't too far from the local village.'

It was when the couple put in an offer that they began to consider its real potential. 'We knew that we could make some significant improvements to the house,' adds Steve. 'The trouble was, once we'd started the changes, it became a bit of a runaway train. The more we did, the more we found there was to do to realise its full potential. In ▶

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LESSONS LEARNT 'Don't assume the people that renovate your property share your vision. Be specific about what you want and the quality you expect'

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DESIGN TIP
'The quality of the rooms, not the quantity, is very important, says Steve. 'One of the attractions of buying the mill was that we could open up space during its restoration'

particular, we wanted to make use of all the space in the mill to create large open rooms.'

For example, something had to be done about the second floor, which consisted of four compact bedrooms and a couple of bathrooms, all separated by 1970s stud walls. 'We demolished them to create a large master bedroom, dressing room and en suite,' recalls Steve. 'We then discovered there was a fantastic vaulted roof with Georgian beams, which had been hidden by the low suspended ceilings, which we then removed.'

By the time the couple had completed this phase of the works, they were left with a much larger space, though now there were only two bedrooms. 'It was beautiful, but it didn't make much financial sense to lose two out of four rooms,' explains Marjorie. 'So we decided to link the stable block to the main house by building a two-storey extension across the courtyard. That way we could accommodate another two bedrooms, two shower rooms, as well as a big open hall, utility room and cloakroom.'

The Buiskools were careful to make the extension fit in with the rest of the buildings inside and out. 'Our newly installed front door used to belong to a school and the hall flagstones matched the originals in the kitchen,' says Marjorie, of the works that ▶

INSPIRATION 'We're inspired by an eclectic mix of things we've seen on our travels to Thailand, New York and the Caribbean'

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KITCHEN-DINER
'We painted this room in White Tie by Farrow & Ball,' says Marjorie. Flagstone floor, £64 per sq m, Classical Flagstones. Chandelier, £995, Antique Crystal Chandeliers. Similar dining chairs, £175 each, Barker and Stonehouse

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GUEST BATHROOM
An old cast-iron roll-top bath was re-enamelled by Marjorie and Steve. Victorian Bathrooms has a similar double-ended cast-iron **bath**, £2,363. Sheepskin **rugs**, £23.99 each, Ikea

GUEST BEDROOM
Marjorie and Steve painted this room in white to make it look more spacious. Walls painted in **Old White** modern emulsion, £32.50 for 2.5 litres, Farrow & Ball. For a similar cast-iron **bed** try the Juniper, £919, And So To Bed

MASTER BEDROOM
After a holiday in Thailand the Buiskools decided to replicate their favourite hotel bed.
Four-poster bed (E4P02), £6,519, Wood Carvers Guild. Stripy cushions, £42 each, Laura Ashley

took 15 months to complete. During this time the family and pets lodged in the cottage next door, which came with the land.

'Our carpenter was brilliant and very innovative,' recalls Steve. 'In the kitchen, he removed a cloakroom to free up more space for a chimney breast and flue to house the Aga, as well as creating a huge oak-top island, with two ovens, a microwave, two wine racks and a wine cooler with a hob. We decided to keep the existing units, so he added more units to match them and repainted them all.'

Having lived in several period properties prior to this, the couple were keen to ring the changes with a more contemporary look. 'We wanted something fresh, so we blended our antiques with modern pieces,' Marjorie explains. 'It meant we could include exotic touches, such as leopard prints, and I love the fact that our French chandelier sits by an African mask! At first, we used strong colours on the walls but it made the period features, such as the oak beams and fireplaces, clash with the modern pieces. We then repainted the walls white, which works much better.

'Christmas here is always magical, as it's such a warm family home,' concludes Marjorie. 'When it snows, the reflected light fills every room and the silence over the countryside is just wonderful.'

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DECORATING TIP 'When blending contemporary and traditional styles, choose a light neutral background to create harmony'

FOR STOCKIST DETAILS **GO TO PAGE 152**

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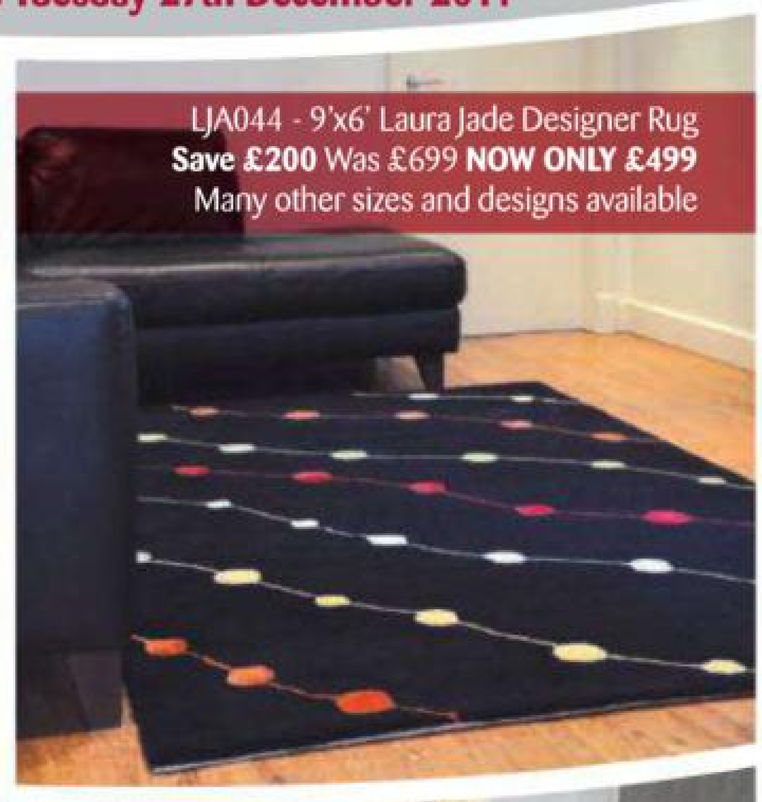

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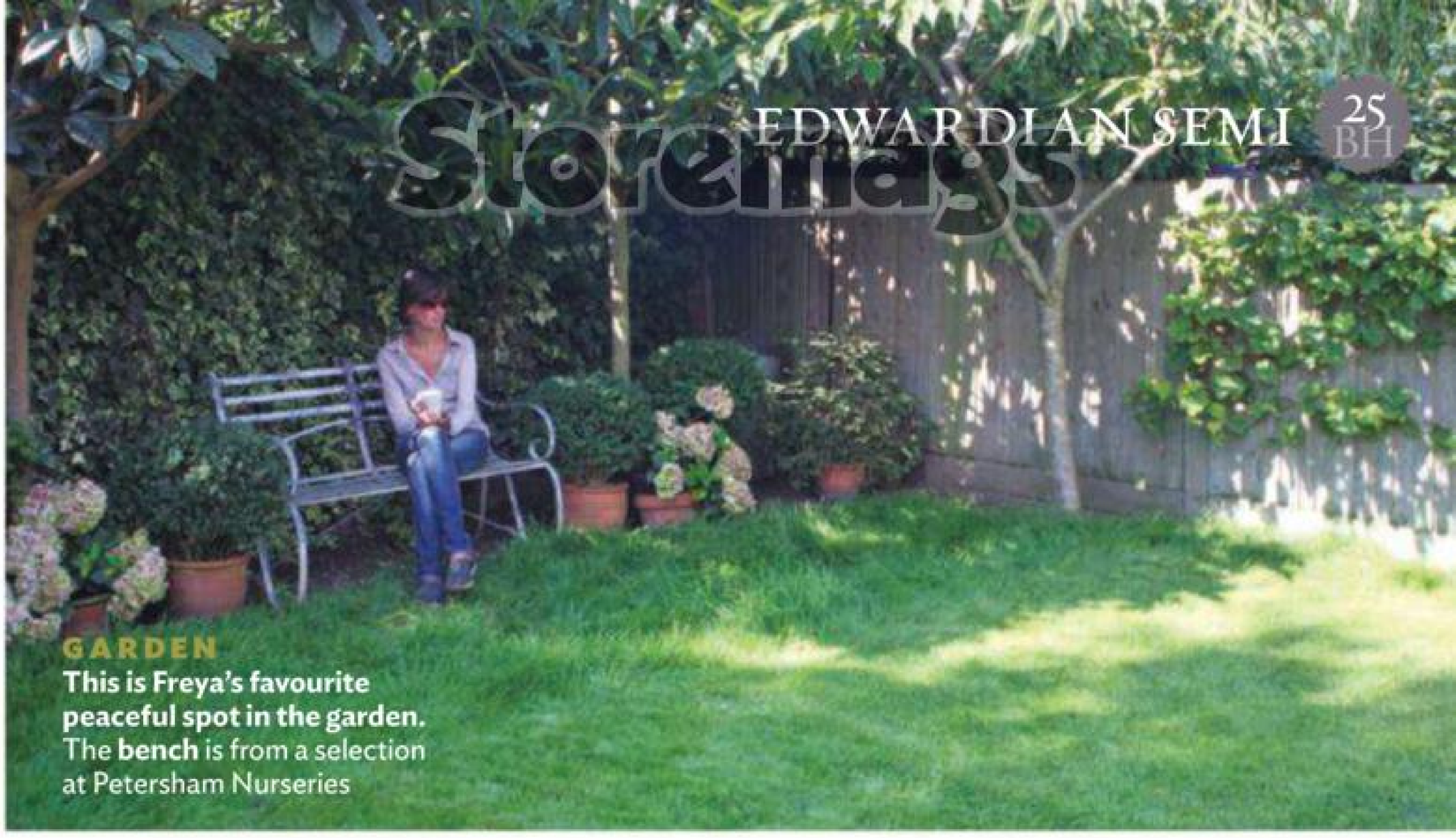

GARDEN
This is Freya's favourite peaceful spot in the garden. The **bench** is from a selection at Petersham Nurseries

AFTER THE FLOOD

FREYA AND PETER KENNEDY WERE FORCED TO START RENOVATING THEIR SURREY HOME SOONER THAN EXPECTED, DUE TO A RAGING STORM

FEATURE NANCY ROBERTS **PHOTOGRAPHY** SIMON FIRULLO

HALL
Freya used blackboard paint to unify and update her mismatched collection of old frames. **Blackboard paint**, £12 for 750ml, Homebase. **Oil portrait painting**, price on application, Victoria Harvey at Deuxieme

DINING AREA
Located in the new extension, the dining space is part of the kitchen. **Nordmyra dining chairs**, £29 each, Ikea. Try Macoa in Slate, £15 per metre, John Lewis, for a similar **tablecloth**

HOME TRUTHS

- **THE OWNERS** Freya Kennedy, a translator, her husband Peter, a pilot, and their sons Benedict and Alexander
- **THEIR HOME** Edwardian semi-detached house, built in 1905
- **LOCATION** Surrey
- **ROOMS** Hall, sitting room, kitchen/diner, utility room, playroom, study, four bedrooms, two bathrooms
- **PURCHASED** 2002
- **PREVIOUS PROPERTY** 'We lived in a two-bedroom maisonette in north London,' says Freya.

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KITCHEN/DINER
Freestanding units create an individual look, bathed in light from Velux windows. Ikea sells similar **kitchen units** in its Värde range, from £299 for a base cabinet

DESIGN TIP
'Dark sofas, Farrow & Ball's wipe-clean paint and shoes off when entering the house – these three things help combat mess from the boys'

SITTING ROOM
Artworks hang from the original picture rail, so the display can be changed easily. **Mistral sofa**, from £1,425, Heal's. **Venini 1970s chandelier**, price on application, The French House. **Vita 4Ri music system**, £550, John Lewis

Freya and Peter Kennedy hadn't planned to begin renovating as soon as they moved into their Edwardian house in Surrey. 'The first day, there was a storm and the old glass-roofed conservatory leaked,' explains Freya. 'Then a couple of weeks later, the bathroom flooded through the ceiling into the dining room. So we had our work cut out, whether we liked it or not!'

But the family were still happy with their new home. 'There was a freestanding kitchen that we liked, and a loft extension, plus we loved the semi-circular terrace and espaliered pear trees outside,' recalls Freya.

The couple tackled the renovation work systematically. The leaks were banished, first with a bathroom refit, then the conservatory was replaced with a kitchen extension. Wooden floors and new carpets were laid, and aluminium windows replaced with timber sashes.

Freya honed her decorating skills, while aiming to honour the period details of her home. 'I was very much a chain-store shopper at first,' she says. 'Now I tend to avoid anything run-of-the-mill. I try to use what I've already got and have learnt to appreciate the

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ALEXANDER'S BEDROOM
A small drop-leaf table is perfect for doing homework. Try Ikea's Muddus **table**, £35, and Great Little Trading Co's Bi-plane **shelf**, £56

STUDY
Freya's mother bought the rocking chair in New York in the 1960s. The Slat Back **rocking chair**, £199, at The Rocking Chair is similar

quality of the old furniture my parents have given to me.' Her eclectic collection includes pieces Freya's father bought in New York in the 1950s: a desk from a convent, an antique rocking chair and an old school trunk. The couple have also added their own one-off finds, such as a 1970s Scandinavian sideboard and oil paintings discovered at antiques fairs. But their home isn't a shrine to vintage style. 'I like to mix and match with pieces from Ikea and the high street, so that the new breathes life into the old,' explains Freya.

It's a timeless, individual mix that stands up well to the rigours of family life. 'I'm reluctant to spend too much money on things that are brand new but may look outdated or chipped in a year or two,' Freya reflects. 'So now, apart from sofas and beds, I try to source vintage furniture first, if I can.'

To this family, unearthing an old family photograph or enjoying the functional charm of tinware repurposed as candleholders is much more satisfying than choosing something off the peg that has been mass produced. 'I think we've achieved a look that we'll be happy to live with for quite a few years,' Freya concludes.

MASTER BEDROOM
In the bay window, blinds are lined with black-out fabric to block morning light. Armoire, price on request, Mark Maynard

LANDING
The penguin etching was from an exhibition at the Royal Academy. Sideboard, from a selection at Liberty

BATHROOM
The window glass was sandblasted, leaving a clear panel at the top to allow more light to get in. Walls painted in **Slipper Satin**, £32.50 for 2.5 litres; bath painted in **Hardwick White**, £17.50 for 750ml, both Farrow & Ball

FOR STOCKIST DETAILS **GO TO PAGE 152**

John Topham, Head Chef and owner of The General Tarleton Inn, Yorkshire

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SISTER ACT

Talented in-laws Christine Wallace and Jude Beautement pooled their resources to create the perfect property for two

FEATURE JO MEARS **PHOTOGRAPHY** RACHAEL SMITH

HOME TRUTHS

THE OWNERS Christine Wallace (shown opposite, right), a textile artist, and her sister-in-law Jude Beautement, a photographer, plus Truffle the Border Collie cross
THEIR HOME Victorian villa
LOCATION Surrey
ROOMS Hall, sitting room, dining room, kitchen, utility room, two studios, study, four bedrooms (all en suite), plus self-contained flat comprising sitting room, bedroom and bathroom
PURCHASED 2009
PREVIOUS PROPERTIES 'Jude lived in Yorkshire, while I had a semi nearby,' says Christine.

DINING ROOM
'Our table is made from 250-year-old oak – Jude and I spotted the piece at an Art in Action event before we'd exchanged contracts on the house, but we knew we had to have it,' says Christine. Flintstone table in oak, £3,000, Nick Over. For details of the next Art in Action event, visit Artinaction.org.uk. Paul Spriggs makes similar carver and spindleback **chairs**, from £375 each

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HALL
'The stained glass depicts our local common,' says Jude.
Stained glass panels, Amanda Winfield at Abinger Stained Glass. Antique oak door, £600, Arc Reclamation

When Christine Wallace and her sister-in-law Jude Beautement found themselves at a crossroads in their lives, having both recently divorced, they decided to join forces and set up home together. 'Our children had all grown up, and we were at something of a loose end,' says Christine. 'So I put the idea of finding a place to share to Jude, and she readily agreed.'

With Christine already well acquainted with this part of Surrey, it didn't take the pair long to find a property that suited their needs. The Victorian villa included a separate, self-contained apartment, so they could each retain a degree of privacy, plus the main building had plenty of room to house two studios, one for Christine's work as a textile artist and the other where Jude could keep her photographic equipment.

Before the sisters-in-law could move in, work needed to be done. 'The interior seemed a little tired to us on our initial viewing,' Christine recalls. 'It was decorated in quite an old-fashioned way and there were also ▶

SITTING ROOM
Christine and Jude first spotted the sofa at a *Grand Designs* exhibition, and they were delighted to discover an ex-display suite up for sale.
Sardinia three-seater sofa, plus matching armchairs, £6,000 the set, Designed Interiors. Varde Ovne In-Line 55 stove, £1,040, Woodstock Stoves

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KITCHEN
A terracotta floor helps offset the cream-painted cabinetry. New Jersey cabinetry, £332 for a 600 x 600mm base unit; **Earthstone worktops**, around £150 per metre, all Wickes. **Pastorelli Antichi Antico floor tiles**, £30 per sq m; **Gambarelli Pavilion splashback tiles**, £54 per sq m, both Rogers Ceramics

FOR STOCKIST DETAILS GO TO PAGE 152

CHRISTINE'S BEDROOM
Being a textile artist, Christine couldn't resist a patterned duvet. Duvet cover, from a selection, John Lewis. Brass bedstead, £1,500, Good-Nites. Driscolls Antiques is a good source of mahogany chests

several unattractive features, such as a false ceiling in the kitchen. We knew it wouldn't take much to get the place into good shape.'

As a first step, the electrics and heating were overhauled. 'We then moved in when we each had a habitable bedroom,' Christine explains. Part of their plan for the house was to let out a few rooms on a B&B basis, as well as running day courses in paper craft, leather work and bookbinding, so the next phase was to upgrade the bathrooms. 'We converted a series of box rooms into en suites, installed a new kitchen and added a large glass extension to the rear of the villa, so that it could accommodate a generous-sized dining room,' recalls Christine.

'We thoroughly enjoyed the project and there were no arguments – only problem-solving discussions!' she continues. 'There was a feeling of teamwork and our builders did a fantastic job, ably helped along by some home-made cakes once we had a kitchen.

'This isn't really a grand house,' concludes Christine. 'But we feel by opening the place up, we've allowed the architecture to speak for itself. Hopefully, we've given this beautiful old building a new lease of life.'

GUEST BEDROOM
Visitors love the cool, blue scheme. For details of Christine and Jude's B&B, as well as the couple's craft courses, visit Greywell house.com

EN SUITE
Christine made the semi-blind using an Ikat cloth brought back from Indonesia. Walls painted in Clockface acrylic emulsion, £27.50 for 2.5 litres, Little Greene

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TAKING SHAPE

AN UNUSUAL ANGLED EXTENSION GAVE MIKE AND GERALDINE SELL A HOME THAT'S CERTAINLY OUT OF THE ORDINARY

FEATURE MAGGIE COLVIN **PHOTOGRAPHY** NICHOLAS YARSLEY

HOME TRUTHS

- **THE OWNERS** Geraldine Sell, a managing director of a coaching consultancy, her husband Mike, chairman of a media company, and their children Gina and Cameron
- **THEIR HOME** Detached Victorian villa, built in the 1890s
- **LOCATION** West London
- **ROOMS** Hall, sitting room, dining room, kitchen/family room, office, snug, utility room, gym, five bedrooms (one en suite), dressing room, bathroom
- **PURCHASED** 1996
- **PREVIOUS PROPERTIES** 'Mike had a house in Acton and I had a flat in West London, too,' says Geraldine.

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For Mike and Geraldine Sell, 1996 was a year of celebrations: their son Cameron was born and they moved to their favourite suburb of London, buying a rare double-fronted Victorian house with spacious rooms and a large garden.

Being a naturally enterprising couple, they spent the first few years mulling over the possibilities of expanding the property upwards and lengthwise, but they were determined they wanted to avoid the conventional route of adding a standard box-shape extension. 'We wanted something a bit different,' Mike recalls. 'We consulted with a friend and architect, Ian Logan, and asked him to come up with something unusual. We also talked to him about designing a suite at the top of the house, which became our very first project.'

Ian's plan raised the roof and opened up the space to span the width of the house, creating a master bedroom with a high, vaulted ceiling, an en suite, dressing room, snug and gym. Floor-to-ceiling dormer windows feature Juliet balconies, which face southwest over the trees and adjacent gardens.

'It's like having a separate penthouse to retire to, and we make more use of it now that the children are teenagers,' admits Mike. 'The downside is that it's difficult for us to go on holiday. We never quite manage to find a hotel suite that matches the luxury of ours at home!'

The kitchen/family room and dining-room extension, which the couple tackled next, turned out to be every bit as dramatic and different ▶

1 DINING ROOM
Geraldine placed shot silk between two panes of glass, cut to the size of the tabletop, to give it a shimmering finish. For similar-shaped chairs, try Calligaris Chicago, £155 each, Mac & Mac Interiors. Walls painted in Amber Gris, £29.50 for 2.5 litres, Fired Earth. For a similar mirror, try Morgan Silver Starburst, £575, Sweetpea & Willow

2&3 KITCHEN
An L-shaped plan incorporates a bespoke central island bar encased in stainless steel, which is repeated in the worktops. The kitchen, price on application, was designed and supplied by Ian Logan at Studiodare Architects, who also designed the extension. The Bombo bar stools are priced at £559 each, from Chaplins. For similarly chunky glasses, try the Acapulco six-piece wine goblet set, £31, O.co

1

2

3

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FAVOURITE FEATURE

'A mirrored chimney breast makes an attractive fireplace really stand out and increases the sense of space within the room'

as the loft conversion. 'Our architect, Ian, had a limitless imagination,' reflects Mike. 'He came up with an ingenious plan: positioning the kitchen extension at a 25-degree angle to the existing house, so that the back faces due southwest. It effectively divides the garden into two spaces; we allotted one area to the children, incorporating a football pitch, while our side resembles a sophisticated Mediterranean-style garden.'

The renovated kitchen follows the diagonal lines of the new extension and focuses around a centrally placed bar, featuring two built-in wine fridges. Geraldine admits to being a reluctant cook, so she's happy to let the bar take precedence over the cooking area. 'I do cook on special occasions and when I do, I enjoy it,' Geraldine reflects. 'Recently I went through a spell of baking cupcakes. We both work, so we designed the kitchen to suit our lifestyle. Entertaining our friends in comfortable surroundings is much more important to us than the food.'

With Mike staking his claim for rich colours in the study and sitting room, and Geraldine expressing her preference for softer golden hues in the dining room and neutral tones in the master bedroom, the couple have fine-tuned the interior scheme slowly. 'In spite of our colour differences, luckily we do agree on style and art,' says Geraldine. 'Buying pictures together has always been fun, and our house is full of visual surprises, which our guests always admire. We love it and so do our children. What more could you ask for?'

FOR STOCKIST DETAILS **GO TO PAGE 152**

DESIGN TIP
'When choosing a builder, don't just go for the lowest quote – it's important to find someone you feel comfortable with and who you think understands your project,' says Mike.

4

1&2 SITTING ROOM
Bamboo blinds and a Moroccan rug create an ethnic flavour.
Find bamboo blinds at John Lewis. For a similar sofa, try Torino, from £2,295, Heal's. Mite F tall lamp, £730, London Lighting Company. Lady Fat table, £1,227, B&B Italia

3 BATHROOM
The mirror reflects the vaulted shape of the extended roof.
For a comparable bath, try Cooke & Lewis Duchess, £560, B&Q

4 MASTER BEDROOM
This is part of the new suite, with the bathroom and snug.
For a bedspread such as this one, try The Petit Floral Quilt, £250, Graham & Green

5 SNUG
Geraldine uses the comfortable L-shaped sofa as a day bed.
For a similar sofa, try Harry, £3,460, Chaplins

5

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- The Southwold peg shelf is available in either plain wood or painted cream. The plain shelf has a chrome bar and hooks, while the cream-painted design features an antique metal bar and hooks, and comes complete with two baskets to store gloves, hats and other items.

MEASUREMENTS

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- Southwold cream-painted peg shelf, L100 x W34 x H23cm

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HOME TRUTHS

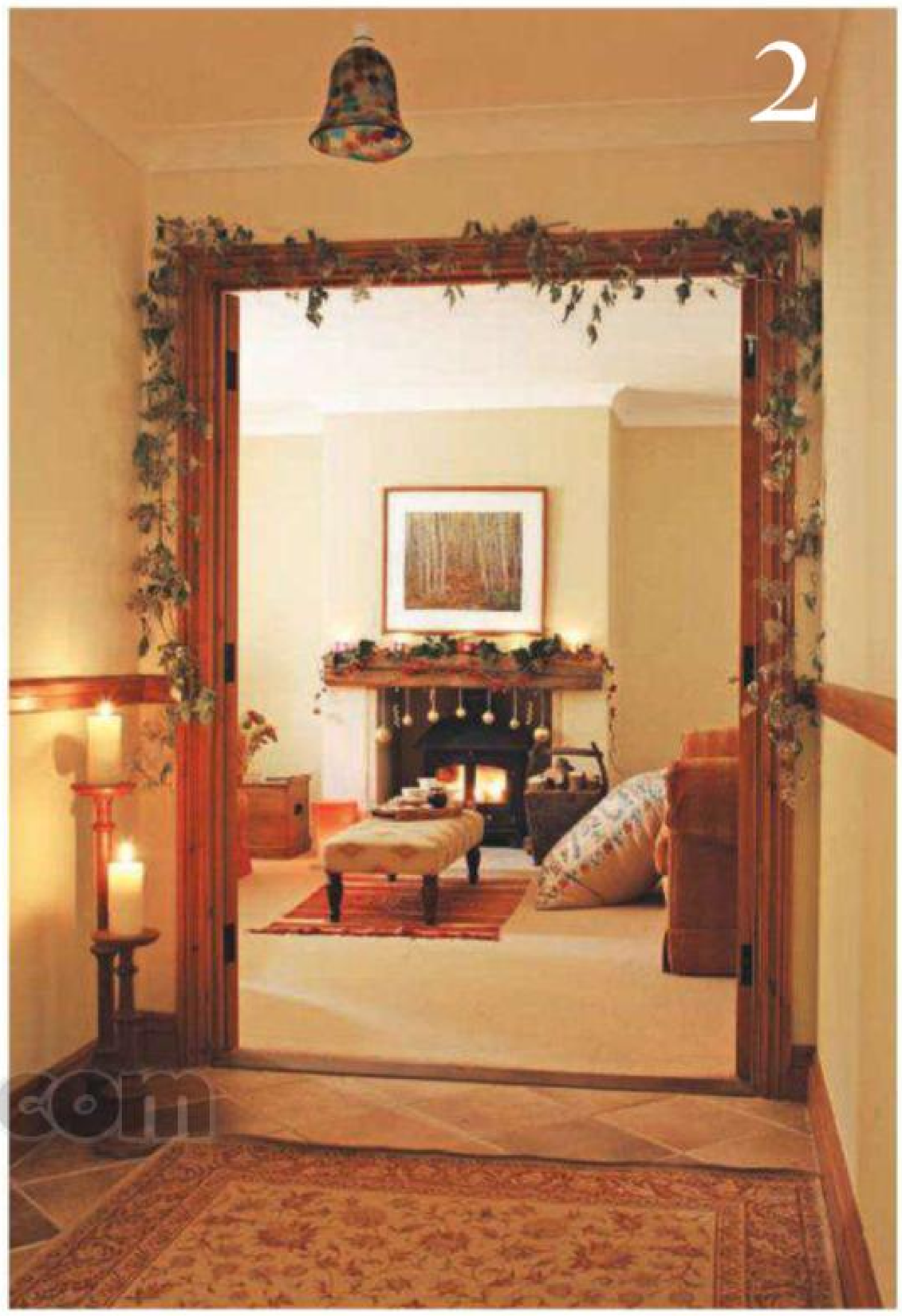
THE OWNERS Fiona Cartmell, a full-time mum, her husband Tim, a Chief Operating Officer in financial services, their children Oliver, Briony and Rory, plus cats Smuggler and Oscar, and Penny the guinea pig
THEIR HOME Detached new-build house, built in 2000
LOCATION Gloucestershire
ROOMS Hall, sitting room, kitchen-diner, family room, study, utility room, cloakroom, conservatory, four bedrooms (one en suite), bathroom
PURCHASED 2000
PREVIOUS PROPERTY 'When we bought this house, we were living in London's Hampstead Garden Suburb,' says Fiona.

1

GOOD AS OLD

Fiona and Tim Cartmell's Cotswold home was only built 10 years ago, but it is already at one with the countryside

FEATURE NANCY ROBERTS **PHOTOGRAPHY** SIMON FIRULLO



2

1 HALL
'Floor tiles were essential at first, when the garden was just a mud patch,' says Fiona. Umbria Terracotta ceramic tiles are similar to these, £55 per sq m, Fired Earth

2 SITTING ROOM
The fireplace beam is from a reclamation yard. Embroidered suzani cushion, from a selection at Anthony Hazledine

3 STUDY
A vintage metal hat box provides quirky storage. Metal hat box, from a selection, Caroline Zoob. Vika Artur trestles, £20 each; Vika Glasholm tabletop, £46; Harola rattan chair, £39, all Ikea

4 FAMILY ROOM
The Cartmells use this space for watching TV. For a similar sofa, try the Sorrento, from £1,100, John Lewis. Directoire bedside cabinets are used as side tables, from £820, Grange

5 KITCHEN-DINER
Untreated wooden furniture complements the ceiling beams. The cushions are made from vintage flour sacks. Bastide carver chairs, £510 each, Fired Earth. Hanging foliage centrepiece, from £35, Laura Thornton at The Bloom Room

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Hankering after a rural lifestyle, London-based Fiona and Tim Cartmell's search for an idyllic village location took them through Dorset, Norfolk and Suffolk. 'We did consider moving within London but, at the time, properties were in hot demand,' says Fiona, 'and relocating really appealed to us.'

One day, the couple happened to be in the Cotswolds, when they decided to look at a new country development. 'We'd visited the village before,' recalls Fiona, 'and felt quite at home there, so we saw the plans and walked round the site. There was nothing except the lovely old stone walls in the garden and an orchard next door, but we made up our minds pretty quickly. We picked our plot and returned at weekends to watch our house grow.'

The property was designed to reflect the traditional local architecture and Fiona was keen to add similar character to the interior. 'It made sense for the sitting room and kitchen to take on the colours of the landscape seen through the windows,' she says. 'We chose fabrics with patterns of leaves and the country,' Fiona continues. 'I also picked out its mid-green and copper beech tones for the kitchen, and then settled on honey and terracotta shades in the sitting room.'

DESIGN TIP 'You can put all sorts of patterns and textures together as long as you're sure about the colours you're working with'

Tiles and carpet followed in the same hues, while Fiona hunted through antiques and craft fairs for pieces to personalise the space. 'As we were so keen to move in, we had to make very quick decisions about items such as sofas and beds,' she recalls, 'but I took a lot longer when it came to finding the accessories that would give our home its own personality.'

As a result, many pieces in the house have a story to tell: the rug in the hall is from Marrakech, and a still-life of pomegranates was actually painted by daughter Briony.

Over the last decade, the house has mellowed into the country home that the family have always wanted. 'The kitchen in particular has a great atmosphere,' says Fiona. 'Tim's a fantastic cook and after a day's gardening or a long walk, Saturday evening suppers are really special. We're so glad we decided to look further afield for our home; now we wouldn't want to live anywhere else.'

1

2

1 MASTER BEDROOM
This room was planned around unusual feather-print curtains.
Try Feather & Egg linen union, £41 per metre, Vanessa Arbuthnott, for similar **curtain fabric**. **Directoire chest**, from £2,780, Grange

2 RORY'S BEDROOM
Wool checked blankets and rattan are teamed with versatile bunks to make this small bedroom a cosy space.
The Anchorage **bunk bed**, £380, Great Little Trading Co, is similar. **Byholma wicker chest**, £50, Ikea

3 OLIVER'S ROOM/ GUEST BEDROOM
When Oliver's away, this is a guest room, complete with a pretty quilt and embroidered picture.
For a similar **quilt**, try double percale Lilac toile de Jouy, £90, Perfectly Boxed. Vintage **embroidered framed picture**, from a selection at Caroline Zoob

3

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ARTFUL BLEND

PARTIES AND PAINTINGS WERE KERSTIN AND MATS JOHANSSON'S PRIORITIES WHEN THEY BUILT A CONTEMPORARY LAKESIDE HOME

FEATURE MAGGIE COLVIN • **PHOTOGRAPHY** SPIKE POWELL

DINING ROOM
A roaring fire warms up guests as they take in the views of the lake outside. Chaplins stocks a range of designer tub chairs; try the Novocento small by Antonio Citterio, £1,380. Habitat's Daborn armchair, £650, is available in similar raspberry-pink fabric

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HOME TRUTHS

THE OWNERS Kerstin Johansson, a teacher, and her husband Mats, who is a businessman
THEIR HOME Timber-framed new-build
LOCATION Southern Sweden
ROOMS Sitting/dining room, kitchen/breakfast room, family room, library/office, cloakroom, four bedrooms, four bathrooms
BUILT 2000
PREVIOUS PROPERTY 'We moved here from a farmhouse nearby,' says Kerstin.

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INSPIRATION

'If you collect art, as we do, building a new home enables you to specify the exact wall space on which to hang each piece – so in a way, the paintings came first and then we constructed the house around them'

SITTING ROOM

In tune with the property's lakeside location, this scheme has a fresh, nautical look. Graham & Green's Windsor collection, £1,850 for a two-seater **sofa**, provides equally plush seating. **Black metal candlesticks**, £150 each, Sola Kitchens Accessory Shop

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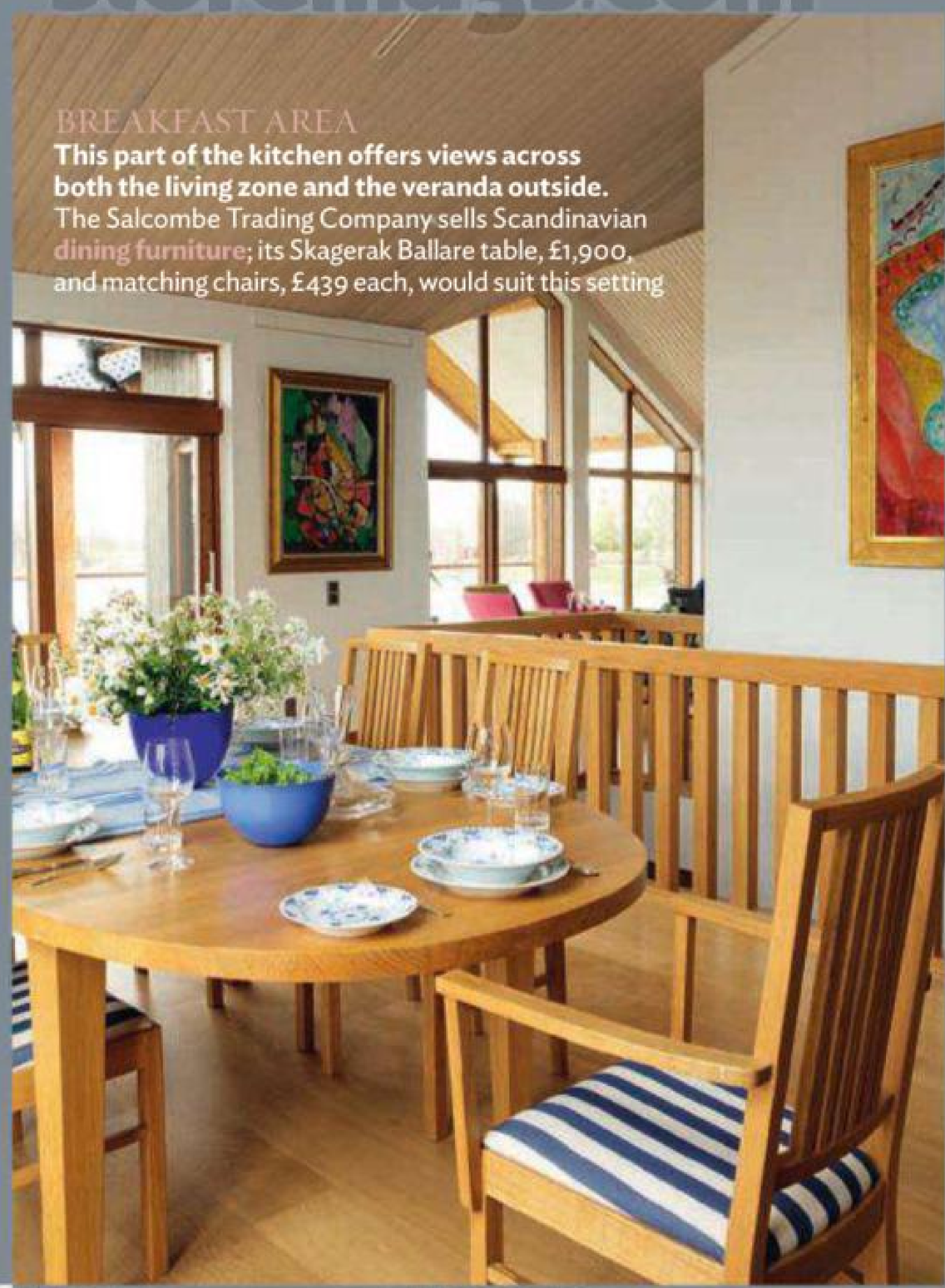
For most of their married life, Swedish couple Kerstin and Mats Johansson have enjoyed the luxury of owning two homes. The couple had a townhouse, from where they could easily commute to work, while the other property was a lakeside summerhouse, a perfect spot for them to retire to at weekends. 'We loved being in the summerhouse, but as I'd inherited it from my parents, the building was rapidly beginning to show its age,' says Kerstin.

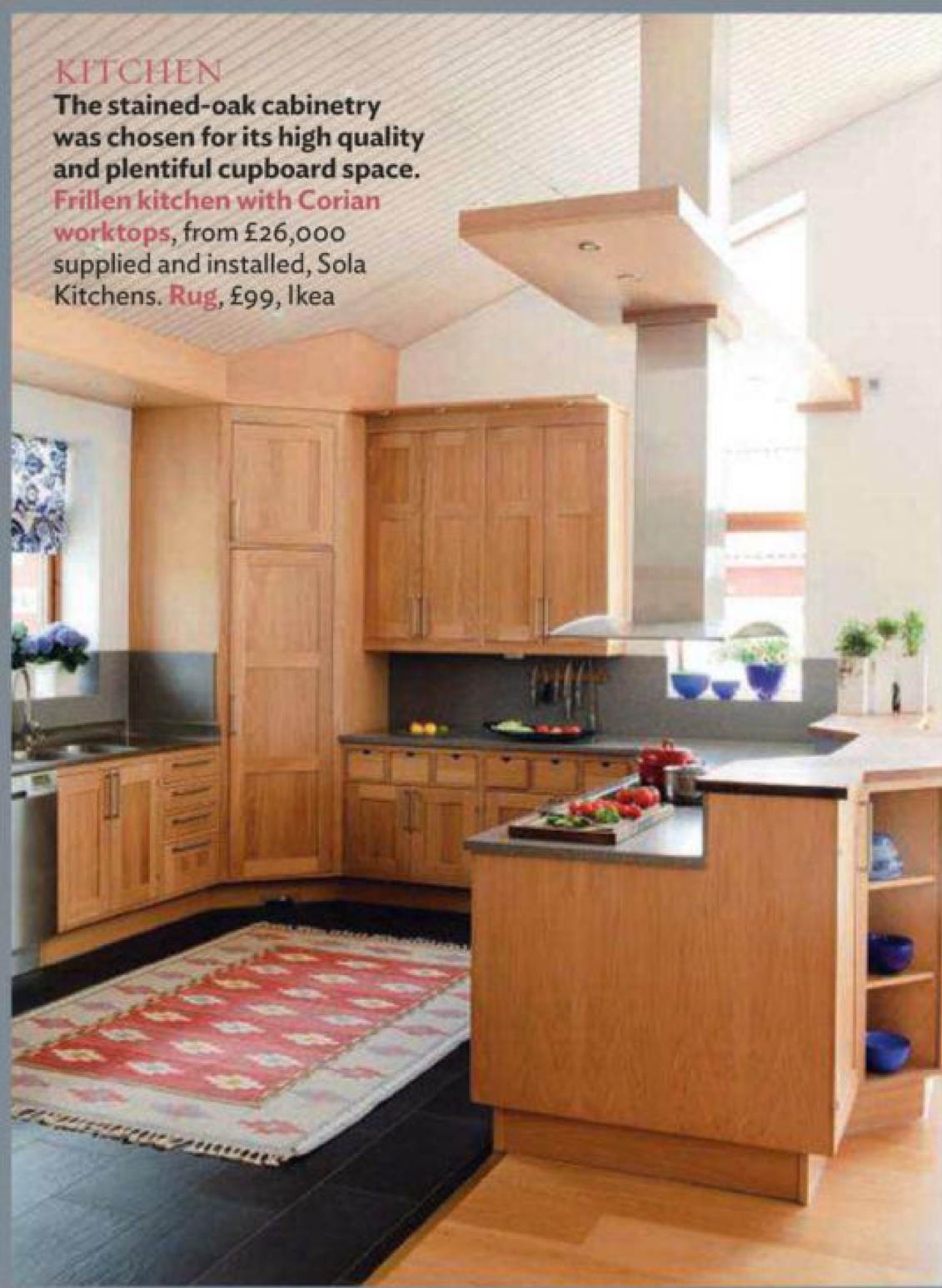
Dating back to the 1900s, the wooden-framed house was sited in an enviable position, being right on the shoreline. However, this exposed location made the place particularly vulnerable to the sometimes harsh Scandinavian weather. 'The window frames and doors had almost rotted away,' Kerstin says.

Realising they would have their hands full maintaining both homes as they got older, Kerstin and Mats took the decision to sell the townhouse, have the summerhouse demolished and build a new property in its place. Mats would then work from home, while Kerstin made the short drive back to town each morning.

Determined to make the most of the ample plot, the Johanssons drew up a list of requirements. 'We have four children, each with families of their own, so plenty of guest accommodation was crucial,' explains Kerstin. 'In addition, Mats and I love to entertain, so a layout conducive for parties ▶



BREAKFAST AREA
This part of the kitchen offers views across both the living zone and the veranda outside. The Salcombe Trading Company sells Scandinavian dining furniture; its Skagerak Ballare table, £1,900, and matching chairs, £439 each, would suit this setting



KITCHEN
The stained-oak cabinetry was chosen for its high quality and plentiful cupboard space. Frillen kitchen with Corian worktops, from £26,000 supplied and installed, Sola Kitchens. Rug, £99, Ikea

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MASTER BEDROOM
Bespoke cherrywood wardrobes inspired a choice of off-white walls to contrast with the richness of the timber. Wardrobes, price on request, Sola Kitchens. Similar wall colour, French Stone emulsion, £27.50 for 2.5 litres, Little Greene. Prêt à Vivre is a good source of striped curtain fabric; try Rouen Sky, £18 per metre

BATHROOM
The Johanssons' grandchildren love to clamber inside this raised spa bath. Similar bathtub, £2,400, CP Hart. Bespoke furniture, price on application, Sola Kitchens

was a must. And finally, but just as importantly, we're avid collectors of modern paintings, so we needed lots of wall space.'

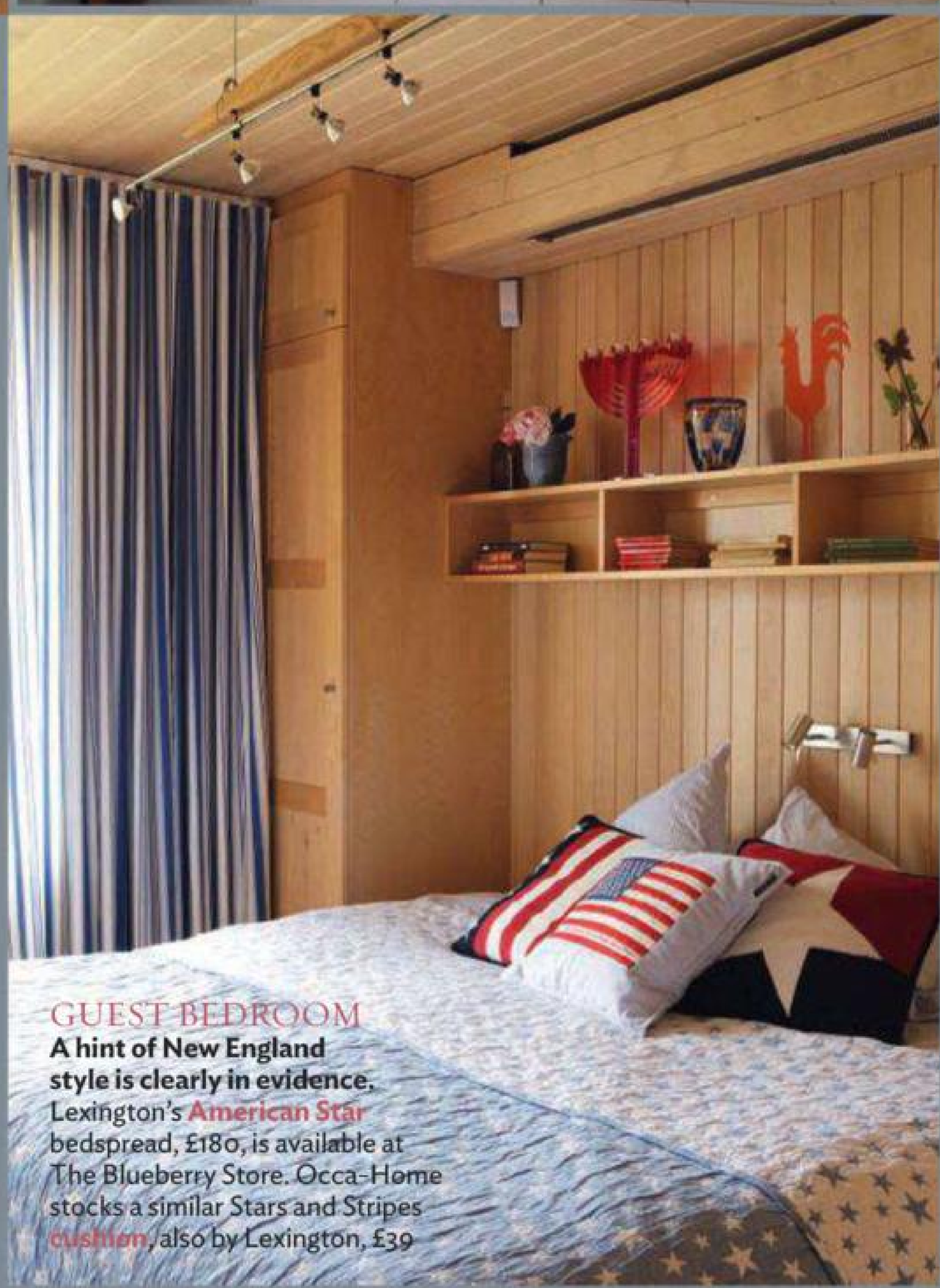
The couple's architect then came up with a radical proposal of his own. Although the design of the house is based along traditional lines, with a series of wooden A-frames at its core, these vary in size to create a series of double-height and triple-height areas. The main reception rooms are also positioned on the building's first floor, so as to maximise views of the lake.

Such attention to detail is also apparent in the property's interior details, where cherrywood doors are designed in Shaker style, and tongue-and-groove panelling clads the ceilings, as well as some of the guest bedrooms. 'Wood instils a sense of warmth, quality and homeliness,' says Mats. 'And in the event of the grandchildren swiping the bedroom walls with their sticky fingers, it's also far easier to clean than white-painted surfaces.'

Kerstin took an equally pragmatic attitude to the decor. 'We ruled out cream sofas and rugs as being somewhat impractical, and opted instead for vibrant colours picked out from our paintings,' she explains. 'We had lots of fun choosing them.'

Indeed, celebrating with the extended family is an almost daily occurrence in the Johansson household. 'I don't think we ever envisaged quite how brilliantly this place would work out,' admits Mats. 'Not even when we saw the architect's plans, which seemed rather radical at first. We're both overjoyed with the results and so are the children. Every week, one of them is on the phone, asking to come down and stay with us.'

Not that Kerstin and Mats mind being on their own, as the couple always have the spectacular lakeside views to enjoy at. 'In winter, you can watch the foxes slipping and sliding across the ice,' says Kerstin. 'Life here is never boring.'



GUEST BEDROOM
A hint of New England style is clearly in evidence. Lexington's American Star bedspread, £180, is available at The Blueberry Store. Occa-Home stocks a similar Stars and Stripes cushion, also by Lexington, £39

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SITTING PRETTY

After years spent running a large guesthouse down the road, Mary and Arthur McAlister can now put their feet up and relax

FEATURE MANDI MILLAR **PHOTOGRAPHY** ASHLEY MORRISON/AMP

HOME TRUTHS

THE OWNERS Mary McAlister, who runs a B&B, and husband Arthur, who is retired
THEIR HOME Converted coach house, built in the 1800s
LOCATION County Antrim
ROOMS Dining hall, sitting room, kitchen/breakfast room, snug, five bedrooms (all en suite)
PURCHASED 1993
PREVIOUS PROPERTY 'We ran and lived in a larger guesthouse nearby,' says Mary.

SITTING ROOM
Antique furniture and modern wallpaper make for an elegant mix. For a comparable olive-green damask wallpaper, take a look at Zoffany's Little Venice, £90 per roll, Wallpaper Direct. Table lamps, £75 each; cushions, from £60 each, all Mocha Interior Design

FAVOURITE FEATURE 'Because the building had to accommodate horse-drawn carriages, the ceilings here are quite high – they add to the sense of space'

KITCHEN/ BREAKFAST ROOM

Tulipwood cabinetry has been hand-painted to keep the scheme nice and bright. Cabinetry, price on request, Elan Kitchens. Farrow & Ball's New White estate eggshell, £43.50 for 2.5 litres, is a match for the paint colour. Travertine floor tiles, from £35 per sq m, Ceramica

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DINING HALL
French-style furnishings add to the relaxed feel.
Dining suite (table, chairs, plus glazed dresser not seen), £3,500; wicker chair and footstool, £800, all Mocha Interior Design

Living above a shop can have its advantages, but there are many drawbacks, too. Back in 1993, Mary and Arthur McAlister ran a 19-room guesthouse located in the centre of a County Antrim town. 'Although we enjoyed being there, it had no garden and we wanted somewhere for our children to play,' says Mary.

As a result, the couple began to look for a property with more land. 'Our neighbour in town used to own this coach house so we knew the property well and had always loved it,' Mary explains. 'It's very secluded, as you can't even see it from the road, yet still within walking distance of the town.'

The pair had missed out when the house first came up for sale, so they were determined not to be pipped at the post the second time around. 'The building was structurally sound, though it was dated inside and not decorated to our taste,' recalls Mary. 'But we wanted to go for it. We moved in straight away and lived quite comfortably for a number of years before we did anything major, apart from repainting.'

In due course, the McAlisters decided to extend the property. 'We applied for planning permission to demolish the attached garage, built in matching stone, and replace it with

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GUEST BEDROOM
Toile wallpaper and curtains create a pretty backdrop. Laura Ashley's Toile wallpaper, £26 per roll, is available in Cerise. Mary rents out rooms on a B&B basis; for details, visit Sholacottage.com

an open-plan kitchen-diner with two en-suite bedrooms above,' says Mary. 'Fortunately, we were successful.'

She made sure the new-build blended perfectly with the original architecture by reusing the stone from the demolished garage and sourcing similar material from a local quarry. The extension's design included French windows that open out to the garden, as well as a Juliet balcony in one of the bedrooms, which offers a picturesque view of the sea.

Once the structural work was complete, Mary began to dress her revamped home. 'My taste is fairly traditional,' she says. 'We've a mix of furniture, from family heirlooms to contemporary designs, but they all seem to work well in here.

'I'd be hard pushed to choose a favourite room,' she continues, 'however, I especially love the dining hall. We'd always wanted to have a fireplace in the entrance, as it makes a home feel so welcoming. I also like the fact that this area has two functions – a hall can be a wasted space.'

Not that the couple could ever be accused of wasting an opportunity. Having moved to their ideal location, Mary and Arthur have now created the perfect property for two, with plenty of room to accommodate the children when they come back to stay. 'This house just works for us,' Mary enthuses.

EN SUITE
Reclaimed floorboards give this part of the new extension an aged look. Chaunceys specialises in reclaimed oak boards, from £85 per sq m. Bathstore's Cambridge roll-top, £569, is a match for this freestanding bath

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HOME TRUTHS

THE OWNERS Lara Cross, a full-time mum, her husband Tim, who is a banker, and their children Yasmin, Charlie and Mia, plus Otis the King Charles Cavalier

THEIR HOME Double-fronted late-Victorian villa

LOCATION Southwest London

ROOMS Hall, sitting room, kitchen-diner/family room, utility room, cloakroom, playroom, seven bedrooms (one en suite), two bathrooms

PURCHASED 2010

PREVIOUS PROPERTY 'We had a house with a smaller garden just down the road,' says Lara.

A PICTURE OF

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MOVING TO A LARGER HOME GAVE LARA AND TIM CROSS

FEATURE JANE CRITTENDEN **PHOTOGRAPHY** HEATHER HOBHOUSE

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DINING AREA
Many of the photographs hanging above the table are framed in recycled South African timber, another nod to Lara's roots in Natal. Picture frames, from £24, Luna at Dandelion Wood. **Joy carver chairs**, £300 each, Chic Shack, upholstered in Manuel Canovas's **Maud**, £115 per metre. **The Housekeeper's Dresser**, from £2,230, The Kitchen Dresser Company

HAPPINESS

ALL THEY COULD WISH FOR – AND MUCH MORE BESIDES

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2

Doing up a house is my idea of heaven,' says Lara Cross, and looking around the stylish home she's created in southwest London, it is clear that Lara has a divine decorating touch.

When she and her husband Tim first came to see the Victorian villa, its interior was a riot of colour, with red walls clashing with green carpets, while pink dado rails stood in stark contrast to a blue backdrop. However, the house had been extended and the garden was generous for a property in the capital – both big plus points for the couple.

'The proportions were so much grander than our previous home,' says Lara. 'Here, our children Yasmin, Charlie and Mia could each have their own bedroom, there was space for an au pair, plus plenty of room for when my family in South Africa come over to stay.'

Having made the place theirs, Lara wasted no time in sanding the floor in the kitchen-diner back to natural oak, exposing boarded-up fireplaces, installing new lighting, and – most importantly – painting throughout. 'The different colour schemes meant there was no sense of flow in the house,' she explains, 'so I decided to go for a single, neutral shade.'

Lara was already keen on the chalky palettes of Little Greene and Farrow & Ball. The decor in her last house had been based around greens, but with a ▶

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1 & 4 SITTING ROOM
'I like to use wallpaper where I can as it really helps lift a scheme, plus it's a quick fix if you don't have lots of art,' says Lara. Rococo Leopard wallpaper, £65 per roll, from the Patina collection at Cole & Son. Family photograph, Vitty Robinson. Clarissa hanging chandelier, price on request, Weylandts. Bespoke ottoman, Helen Mullany, upholstered in Orbit in Putty, £70 per metre, Zinc Textile. Savannah animal busts, £58 each, Anthropologie

2 HALLWAY
Original Victorian features make a striking first impression. Fillsta pendant, £52, Ikea. Pedlars sells framed London Bus destination blinds, £225 each

3 KITCHEN
Lara gave her inherited units a new look with a few coats of soft-grey paint. French Grey acrylic eggshell, £32.50 for 2.5 litres, Little Greene

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1

1 GUEST BEDROOM
'Helen used a set of silk curtains to make this lovely bedspread with a ribbon trim,' says Lara. Bedspread, Helen Mullany. Dressing table, £325; bedside tables, £200 each, all Quirky Dovetail

2 CHARLIE'S BEDROOM
'My son spends literally hours poring over his wall map,' says Lara. 'He loves it.' World Map wallpaper, £124.95 for an eight-sheet pack, Stanfords

3 MASTER BEDROOM
The dark upholstered headboard and faux-fur throw add a masculine feel to the scheme. Faux-fur throw, £187.50, Moore and Moore. Headboard upholstered in Orbit velvet in Mocha, £70 per metre, Zinc Textile

4 & 5 MIA'S BEDROOM
This young lady enjoys her own pink palace. Chinese Roses wallpaper by Brian Yates, £57 per roll, Tangletree Interiors. Middleton Pink emulsion, £29.50 for 2.5 litres, Farrow & Ball

FOR STOCKIST DETAILS **GO TO PAGE 152**

INSIGHT
IDEAS FOR FEATURE WALLS

- Try using a favourite wallpaper in more than one colourway. For instance, you might mix graduating shades of thick stripes in a hallway, or various pastel florals in a bedroom.
- The other extreme is to leave some plastered walls in their natural state, such as those in the bathroom. This will create a calm, pared-back look that's bang on trend right now.
- If family photographs aren't your style, why not make a statement by filling a wall with framed album covers?
- Lastly, create a three-dimensional pattern with fretwork panels, resulting in a chic, Moroccan-style look.

blue Aga already in situ in the kitchen, Lara this time went for greys, adding discreet patterned wallpaper in metallics to provide depth and texture.

With the backdrop complete, Lara set her mind to dressing the windows, but found it hard to source the right fabrics. Fortunately, a friend suggested she call interior designer Helen Mullany. 'Helen and I clicked from the start, because she understood exactly what I wanted,' says Lara. 'For example, I knew a chocolate silk would work well in our bedroom and Helen showed up with five different samples and sure enough, I found one I liked.'

Lara adored Helen's approach so much, she worked with her throughout the renovation, sourcing upholstery and lampshades, as well as curtains and blinds. In particular, the pair spent a long time thinking about how to bring the sitting room to life. 'It's a big room and the sofas and chairs seemed so far apart from one another,' Lara explains. 'Helen drew a design for the ottoman that was exactly the right size and height to draw the scheme together, and then had it beautifully made for me.'

With the sitting-room's animal heads making reference to Lara's native Natal, she has created a slice of South Africa here in the London suburbs. 'Because I brought so many unusual pieces from Africa, it makes our house look a bit different, too,' says Lara. 'It's important to find a style of furnishing that truly reflects your character.'

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STUNNING LOOKS

Davina Fox-Hill couldn't believe her luck when she found a flat with a breathtaking view over central London

FEATURE HEATHER DIXON **PHOTOGRAPHY** COLIN POOLE

HOME TRUTHS

THE OWNER Davina Fox-Hill, who runs a property design and holiday letting company, and her son Zachary
HER HOME Top-floor apartment within a Grade II listed Art Deco mansion block
LOCATION Central London
ROOMS Sitting/dining room/kitchen, two bedrooms, bathroom
PURCHASED 2010
PREVIOUS PROPERTY 'Before moving to London, I had a four-bedroom, contemporary flat in the South of France,' says Davina.

SITTING ROOM
Subtle variations in tone give this monochrome scheme depth and texture. Sancal sofa; its Box two-seater, from £1,025, Nest, is a match. Barcelona-style chair, £499, David Phillips Furniture

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KITCHEN/DINING AREA
Davina customised her old table by painting it with a Union Jack. London Black and White mural, from £23.50 per sq m, MuralsWallpaper.co.uk. Caledonia cabinetry, £670 for a 600 x 600mm four-drawer base unit, Wickes. White glass worktops, £260 per sq m, Cricklewood Glass. Bespoke, upcycled chandelier, £2,950, Madeleine Boulesteix. Kartell Philippe Starck Clear Louis Ghost chairs, £179 each; Clear Victoria Ghost chairs, £160 each, all John Lewis

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DESIGN TIP

'Mural wallpaper is a great way of giving a room the wow factor,' says Davina. 'Thousands of designs are available online, but do remember to use washable papers in heavy-duty areas, such as kitchens or bathrooms.'

Davina Fox-Hill didn't fully take in her London apartment when she went to see it for the first time – she was too busy admiring the view. 'The flat itself looked rather sad and tired,' Davina recalls, 'but it was the outlook across one of the capital's most beautiful parks that sold the place to me – I instantly imagined myself sitting there on the balcony, gazing out across the endless skyline.'

However, Davina's second visit to the mansion block really brought home the apartment's state of disrepair. 'It had been rented for years and looked the worse for wear,' she says, 'but I'd renovated properties before and knew I could turn the flat into something special, even though it would involve a great deal of time, effort and imagination.'

Having made the flat hers, Davina decided to complement its impressive Art Deco setting with a modern and glamorous scheme. 'I removed the old 1970s-style kitchen, took up the carpets and had the apartment rewired and replumbed,' she explains. 'Although the initial work was quite superficial, I knew it would completely change the look of the interior.'

With its compact layout, Davina's first priority was to make the most of the apartment's available space. 'I decided to keep the living area open plan, with a galley-style kitchen along one wall,' she says. Painted white, with mainly white or Perspex furniture, the room has been kept bright and uncluttered. Davina furnished the flat with a combination of pieces from her last ▶

SITTING ROOM

A mirrored wall adds to the sense of light and space. **Mirrored glass**, £105 per sq m, Cricklewood Glass. **Ektorp two-seat sofa with chaise**, £529, Ikea. **Cushions**, £30 each, Zachary Valentine. **Posters** of Marilyn Monroe are available at Allposters.co.uk, from £5.99

BATHROOM

Davina wanted clean, simple lines here, and chose white sanitaryware teamed with marble-effect tiles. **Tiles**, £15 per sq m, Walls and Floors. **Pool acrylic bath**, £190, Bathstore

house in France, alongside new accessories to give the apartment its distinct, contemporary style.

'I recycle as much as I can,' says Davina of her design ethos. 'I'd rather revamp a piece with a coat of paint than buy something new. My dining table, for example, was too big for this apartment, so I just took the middle leaf out of it. I also kept my old sofa and re-covered it. It looks as good as new.'

Davina also spent hours scouring shops for clever ideas. A favourite find is the cityscape mural that fills the kitchen wall. 'I thought it was perfect for an urban apartment,' she says. 'In an ideal world, I'd have put the kitchen somewhere overlooking the park, but this is a great second option. It's much better to enjoy this amazing panorama of London than stare at a blank wall when I'm cooking.'

As well as her eye for spotting trends, Davina's love of old-fashioned glamour is apparent, too. 'You can make a bit of sparkle go a long way,' she says. 'The silver wallpaper in the master bedroom is really loud, and even though I only used it on a single wall, I was worried that it looked over-the-top. But once the furniture was in, the scheme just came together.' Just like the rest of Davina's home, all it took was time – and a positive outlook.

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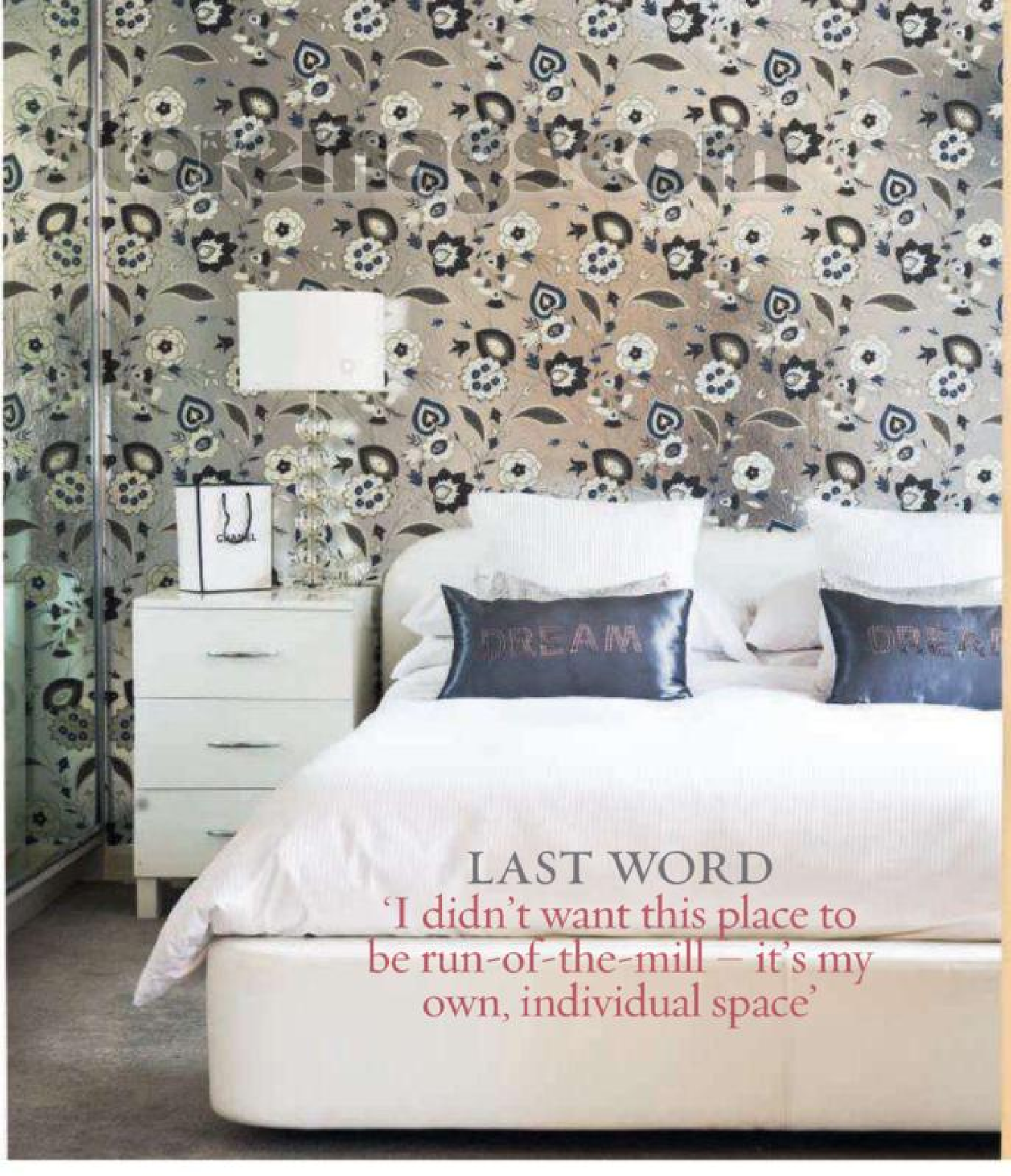

LAST WORD

'I didn't want this place to be run-of-the-mill – it's my own, individual space'

MASTER BEDROOM

With such an eye-catching wallpaper on show, Davina kept the rest of the decor low key. **Paisley Flowers wallpaper**, £85 per roll, from the Waldorf collection at Cole & Son. **Bubble lamp**, £140, La Maison. **Bedside table**, £160, Zachary Valentine

ZACHARY'S BEDROOM

Taking his lead from his mother, this young man is bang on trend. Heal's sells the **Kartell Bourgie table lamp**, £280. **Rombico wallpaper**, £84 per roll, from the Teatro collection at Osborne & Little. Vivienne Westwood **Union Jack wallpaper panel**, £130, Cole & Son. Upcycled **chandelier**, from £200, Madeleine Boulesteix. **Cushions**, from a selection at BoConcept

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'WE BROUGHT THIS OLD HOUSE back to life'

Amanda and Keith McGuile transformed a former guesthouse into an elegant and tasteful family home

FEATURE MARIE McMILLEN ✤ **PHOTOGRAPHY** ASHLEY MORRISON/AMP

HOME TRUTHS

- **THE OWNERS** Amanda McGuile, who is an actress, her husband Keith, an investment banker, and their son Bailie, plus Gizmo and Po the Shih Tzus
- **THEIR HOME** Victorian terrace, built around 1883
- **LOCATION** County Down
- **ROOMS** Hall, drawing room, sitting/dining room, kitchen/breakfast room, utility room, cloakroom, four bedrooms, two bathrooms
- **PURCHASED** 2009
- **PREVIOUS PROPERTY** 'Before this, we lived in a Belfast semi,' says Amanda.

BREAKFAST BAR
Rather than a dining table, Amanda opted for this handsome island unit. Bespoke island, price on application, Make Kitchens. Chandelier, The Interior Company; its white-enamel eight-arm design, £350, is a match

SITTING ROOM
'Decorating in whites and pastels has given our period home a classic look,' says Amanda. Cushions, from a selection at Laura Ashley; the company's Crawford Floral in Eau De Nil, £40, would suit this setting. Sofa.com's Horatio, from £970, is similar to this two-seater sofa

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When Amanda and Keith McGuile decided to move from Belfast to a town just up the coast, they went in search of a house located close to the beach. Little did the couple realise, however, that they would soon embark on a major property restoration, as Amanda explains...

Did you and Keith have a certain kind of house in mind?
We both love Victorian architecture but, initially, we couldn't find anything that ticked all the right boxes. After several fruitless viewings, we took a stroll to the local marina, turned down a side street and spotted this place. As a former guesthouse, the terrace clearly needed loads of work, but we immediately sensed that the house was right for us.

What impressed you the most?
Every room had its own treasures, including ornate ceiling roses, elaborate corbels and original fireplaces – I was like a child in a sweet shop! But the property was crying out to be loved again. Some of the brick walls were badly cracked and, because of the broken gutters, it felt very damp inside.

As a former guesthouse, did the terrace have any unusual features?
Along with the Fire Exit signs dotted around the place, hand basins were located at random spots throughout the building. In addition, the chimney breast in the dining room had been removed

DESIGN ADVICE

'Expect the unexpected when you buy an old house – it might be something magical, such as an original floor hidden under a carpet, or it could be crumbling joists!'

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to seat more diners and replaced with an inadequate steel beam. We had to reinstate a proper RSJ to prevent our three-storey home transforming itself into a bungalow!

That sounds like quite a challenge – what other problems did you face?
Another factor we had to take into consideration is that the house is listed. We needed quite a healthy contingency fund to carry out the work, as many of the like-for-like materials required for repairs to ▶

KITCHEN/ BREAKFAST ROOM
Hand-painted units, granite worktops and porcelain flooring combine to create a stylish look: 'This is the scheme I've hankered after for years,' Amanda says.
Cabinetry and worktops, price on application, Make Kitchens. Porcelain tiles, £60 per sq metre, My Tiles. Walls painted in Dix Blue, £29.50 for 2.5 litres, Farrow & Ball

DINING ROOM
'We restored the old floorboards then applied a stain,' Amanda explains. 'I felt a dark finish would contrast well with the white-painted furniture.'
Table, £600; chairs, £100 each; all eBay; the furniture is painted in New White, £43.50 for 2.5 litres, Farrow & Ball

PATIO
This pretty spot is the perfect place in which to soak up the sunshine.
Patio set, £350, The Garden Centre. **Lantern**, £23, from a selection at TK Maxx

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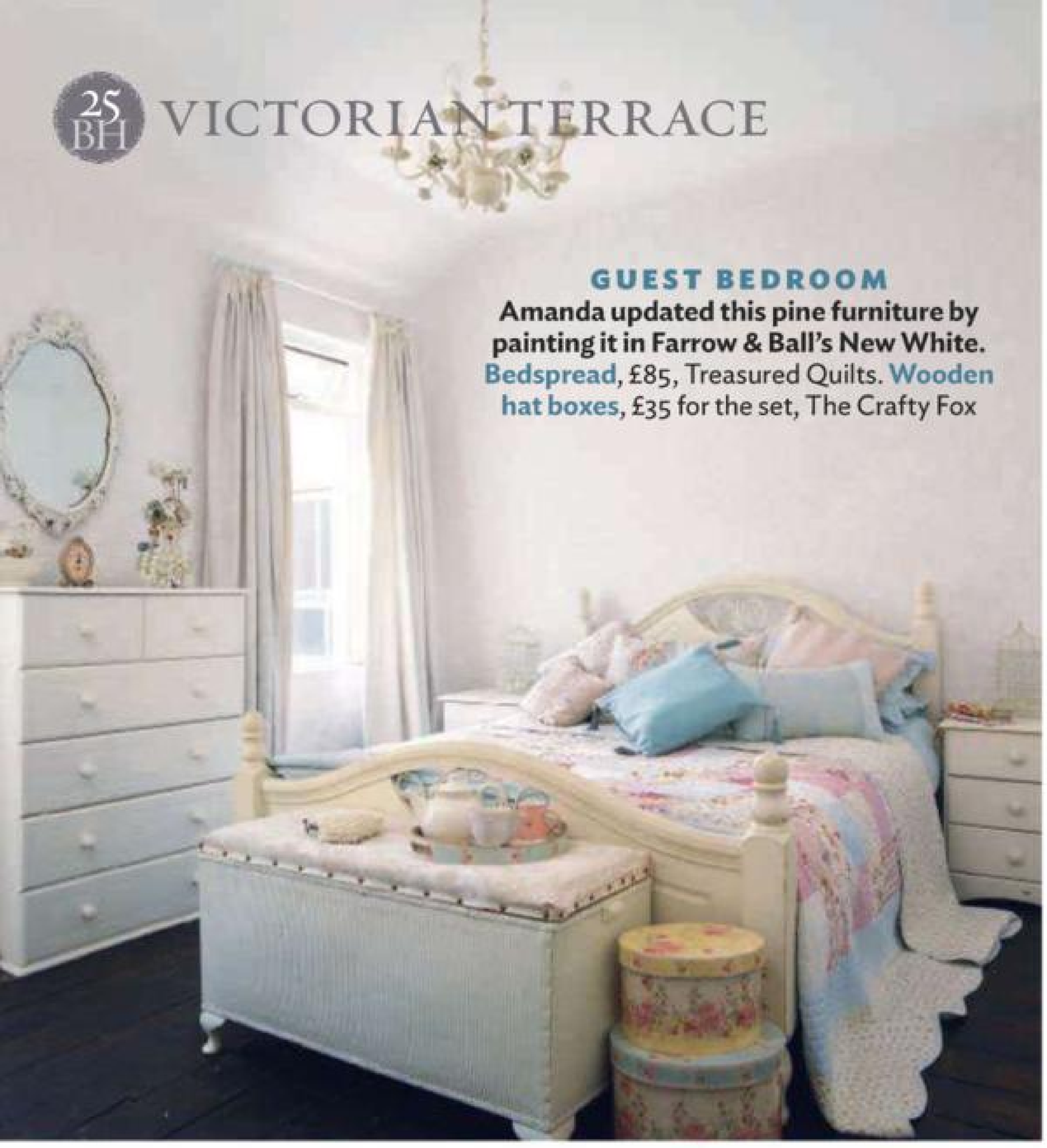
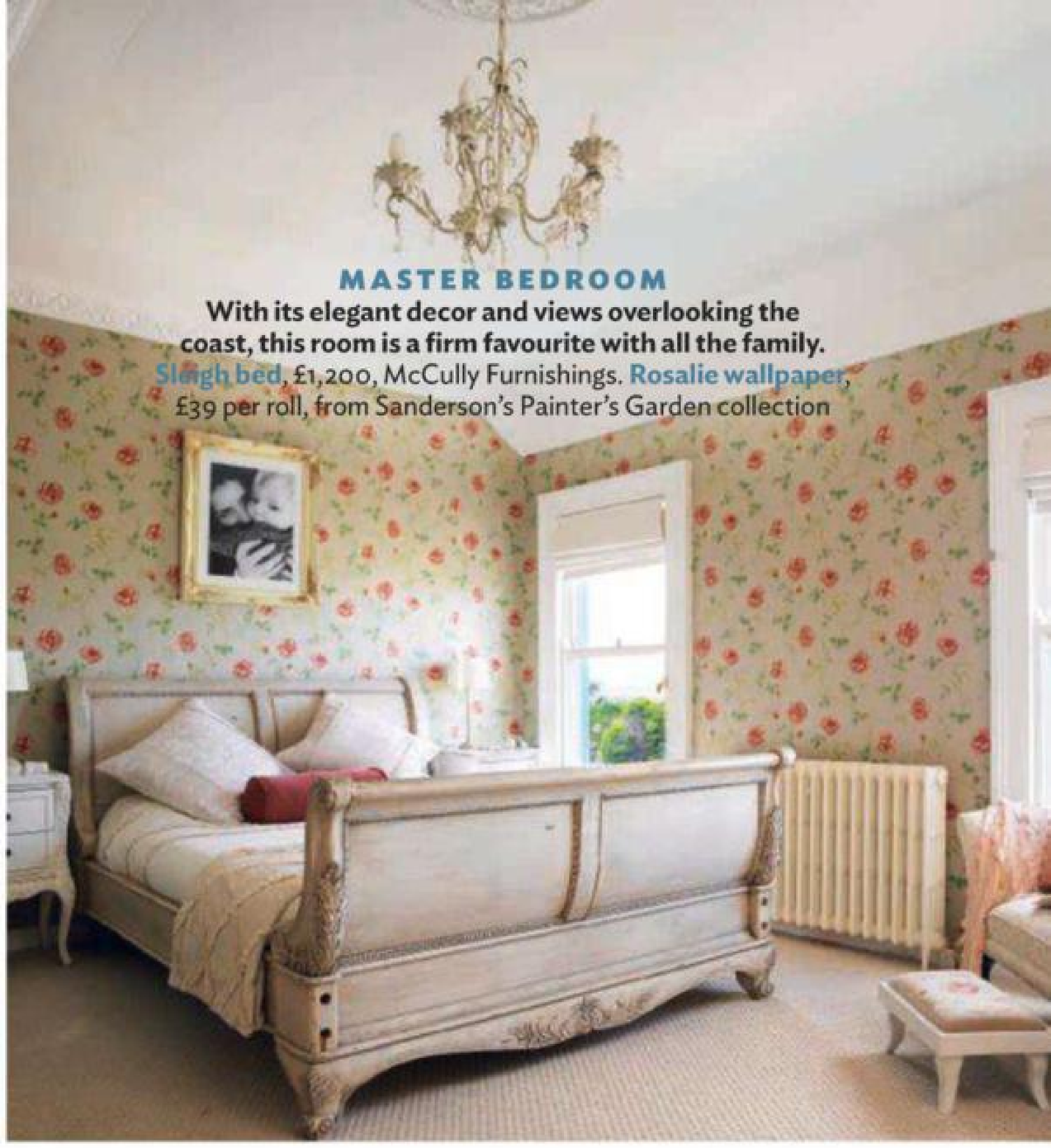


GUEST BEDROOM
Amanda updated this pine furniture by painting it in Farrow & Ball's New White. Bedspread, £85, Treasured Quilts. Wooden hat boxes, £35 for the set, The Crafty Fox



MASTER BEDROOM
With its elegant decor and views overlooking the coast, this room is a firm favourite with all the family. Sleigh bed, £1,200, McCully Furnishings. Rosalie wallpaper, £39 per roll, from Sanderson's Painter's Garden collection

listed buildings can be more costly than those used for modern designs. The exterior, for example, had to be re-rendered with lime mortar rather than cement, because houses like this need to breathe. So all in all, it was a pretty steep learning curve to get every one of these details right.

What was the next step?
Having invested so much in the fabric of the building, we didn't want to compromise on the final finish and opted for a new kitchen and bathroom fittings. When it came to the decor, I chose to paper many of the walls with large-scale patterns, because I think they add depth and texture to a scheme.

Do you have a particular style?
I've always loved shabby chic and I think this look works particularly well in period properties. I also had endless fun choosing the various wallpaper designs – in many ways, a room needs less furniture and fewer pictures when a wallpaper makes such a grand statement.

Now that the work is finished, how are you enjoying living in the house?
When Keith and I sit up in bed and look out at that magnificent coastal view, we know the work's been worth it. It's been a huge task bringing this old house back to life, but we can look forward to being here for many years to come.

BATHROOM
This scheme feels both fresh and luxurious: 'I've always wanted a bathroom with flock wallpaper,' says Amanda. The wallpaper is a discontinued line but Majestic Damask in Teal, £25 per roll, Flock Your Wall, is similar. Bath, £1,700, Victorian Bathrooms

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FOR STOCKIST DETAILS GO TO PAGE 152

RICHLY REWARDED

When Jane and Philip Parvin gave their Queen Anne house a makeover, they reaped the benefits of their grandiose home

FEATURE MELANIE WHITEHOUSE ✤ **PHOTOGRAPHY** BOB SMITH

HOME TRUTHS

- **THE OWNERS** Jane Parvin, an image consultant, her husband Philip, a city worker, and their children Phoebe and Jay, plus cats Roly and Tabby
- **THEIR HOME** Grade II listed, Queen Anne house
- **LOCATION** West Sussex
- **ROOMS** Hall, sitting room, kitchen-diner, family room, snug, utility room, cloakroom, study, media room, five bedrooms, dressing room, four bathrooms
- **PURCHASED** 2007
- **PREVIOUS PROPERTY** 'Our last home was an open-plan Victorian house in southwest London,' says Jane.

SNUG

Luxurious fabrics and a roaring fire create a cosy effect in this room. Floor lamp, from a selection, Clifford Interiors. Panelling painted in Old White and Charleston Gray estate eggshell, both £43.50 for 2.5 litres, Farrow & Ball

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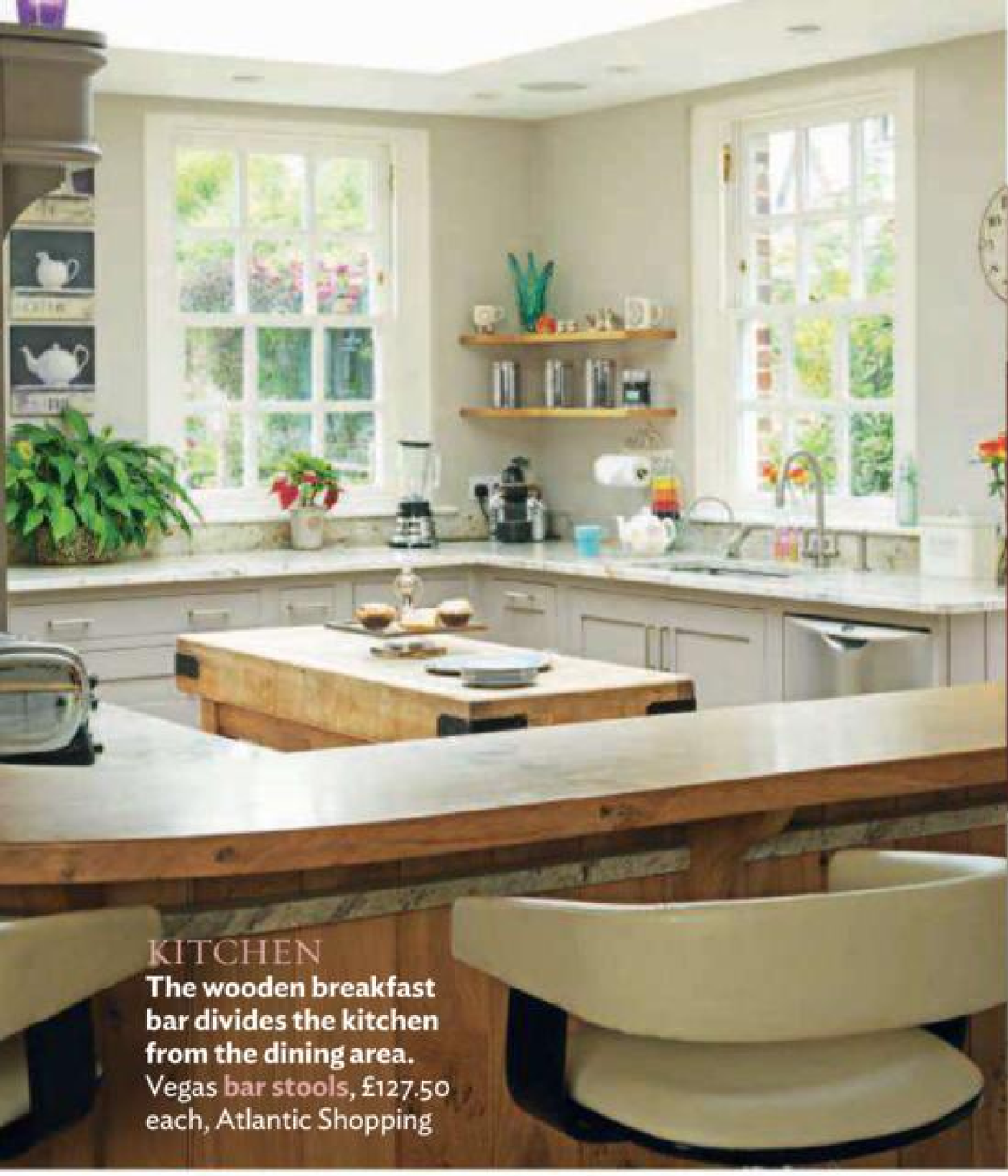
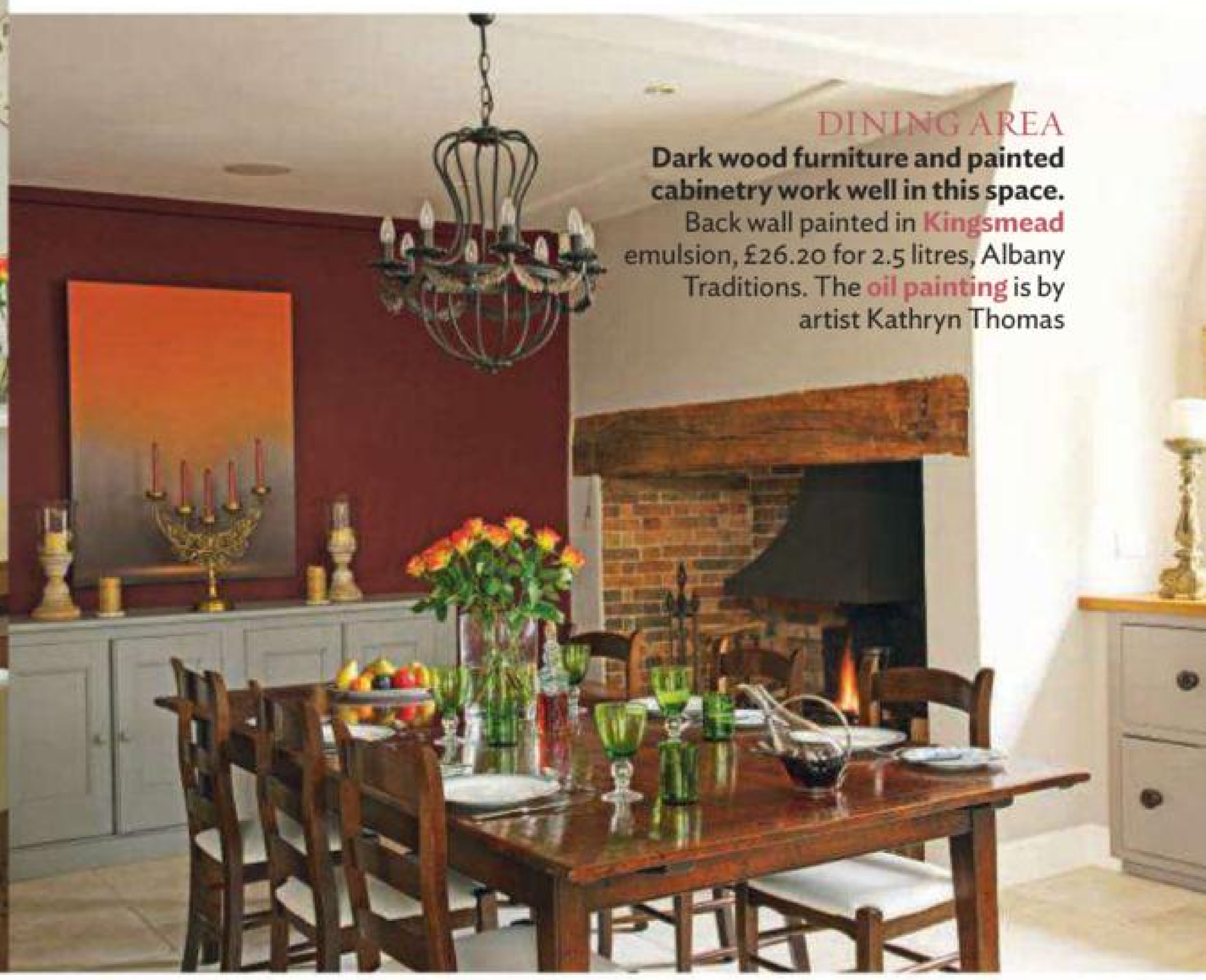


KITCHEN
The wooden breakfast bar divides the kitchen from the dining area. Vegas bar stools, £127.50 each, Atlantic Shopping



DINING AREA
Dark wood furniture and painted cabinetry work well in this space. Back wall painted in Kingsmead emulsion, £26.20 for 2.5 litres, Albany Traditions. The oil painting is by artist Kathryn Thomas

When Jane and Philip Parvin moved into their Queen Anne property in Sussex, they had no plans to change it. 'The house was perfect and we didn't think it needed anything doing to it,' says Jane. However, they soon changed their minds, and once they started, they didn't stop for some time.

'When we bought the house, it already had planning permission to raise the ceiling in the attic and install Velux windows,' explains Jane. 'It meant we could add an extra two bedrooms and a bathroom, so we went ahead with the work.' Keen to extend outwards, as well as upwards, Jane and Philip put in an application for planning permission to build onto the side of the property. 'While they were working on the attic roof, the builders suggested we extend at the side of the house, so that we could change the location of the kitchen,' says Jane. 'At the same time, a small conservatory at the back of the building was knocked down and we created one large room for the new kitchen-diner, plus a family room and study.

'There was very little light in here before,' Jane continues, 'but thankfully our application was accepted and now we have wonderful views of the garden. It feels like a different house.'

The Parvins knew that living in the house while the renovation work was going on wouldn't be easy. 'We confined ourselves to just two bedrooms during this time,' says Jane. 'Luckily, we still

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KITCHEN
A small conservatory was knocked down to make space for the new kitchen extension. Cabinetry, from Bespoke Kitchen Interiors; painted in Charleston Gray eggshell, £43.50 for 2.5 litres; walls in Elephant's Breath emulsion, £29.50 for 2.5 litres, both Farrow & Ball

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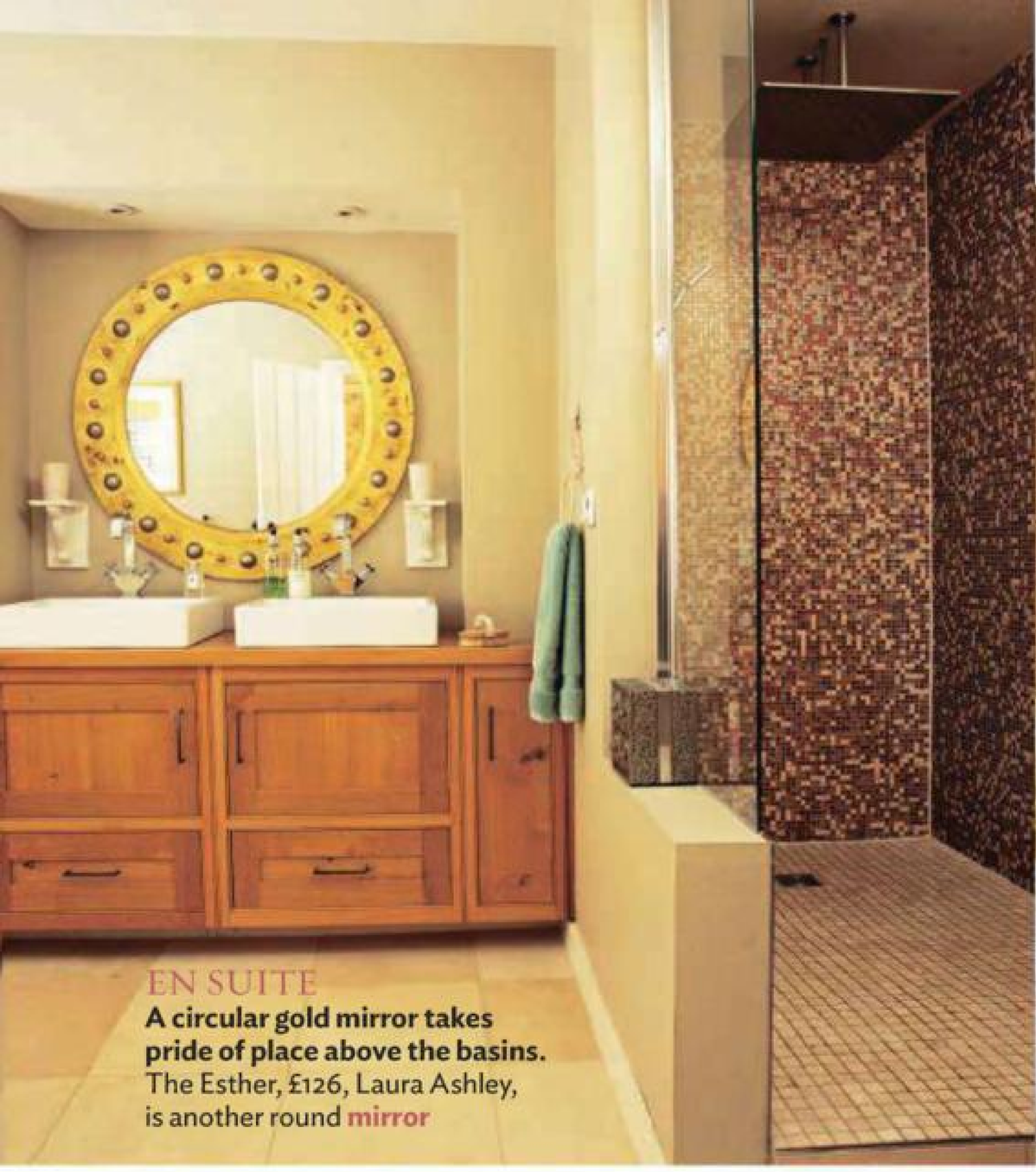

EN SUITE
A circular gold mirror takes pride of place above the basins. The Esther, £126, Laura Ashley, is another round **mirror**

MASTER BEDROOM
Fur throws and shaggy cushions provide plenty of texture in the bedroom. **Elementi Patina vinyl wallpaper**, £72 per roll, Zoffany. The White Company sells faux-fur **throws**; its Almond throw is £100

had use of the old kitchen downstairs, while the new one was being built. I couldn't have coped otherwise, as we were rewiring and replumbing the whole house at the same time. It was chaos.'

With the building work completed, Jane and Philip turned their attention to the final part of the house to be finished: the sitting room. 'This actually turned out to be the trickiest room of them all,' recalls Jane. 'We'd both run out of steam by this point. I'm sure it would have been a lot easier to have hired an interior designer to come and transform each room for us, but that's not really what we what we wanted to do.'

The couple have firm views when it comes to decorating. 'We believe in recycling whatever we can and not replacing pieces just for the sake of it,' says Jane. 'We wanted to take our time on each room and get it right. Working as an image consultant has given me confidence with colour. I like natural walls with surprises, like the deep, dark red wall in the dining area, splashes of colour and bits of wallpaper,' she continues. 'I also think it's important to establish continuity from one space to another so, for example, I'll pick a colour that perhaps features in the curtains in one room, and use it in another area to create a sense of calm and cohesion.'

After years of hard work, the Parvin family are now able to settle down and enjoy the finished results. 'Once the sitting room was completed, I knew we were done,' says Jane. 'Now we can sit back and enjoy the fruits of our labour.'

GUEST BEDROOM
Duck-egg and gold shades give the guest bedroom a luxurious feel. **Erin floral wallpaper**, £15.30 per roll; **Mia quilt**, £64.80, both Laura Ashley

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RUSTIC CHIC

SARAH AND SEAN MASON'S COUNTRY HOME HAS ALL THE STYLISH GOOD LOOKS OF A TOP-END URBAN APARTMENT

FEATURE MAGGIE COLVIN **PHOTOGRAPHY** NICHOLAS YARSLEY

HOME TRUTHS

- **THE OWNERS** Sarah Mason, a former textile designer, her husband Sean, who runs a potato merchants and transport company, and their sons Joseph and Finnbharr
- **THEIR HOME** Stone farmhouse, built in 1910
- **LOCATION** Herefordshire
- **ROOMS** Hall, sitting room, dining room, kitchen/breakfast room, boot room, utility room, snug, study, cloakroom, five bedrooms (one en suite), bathroom
- **PURCHASED** 2001
- **PREVIOUS PROPERTY** 'Before moving here, we lived in a barn conversion,' says Sarah.

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SITTING ROOM

'We sandblasted this metal fireplace,' says Sarah. 'Once cleaned, the surface has a rich, reflective quality.' Upholstered armchairs, £200 each, Brightwells Auctioneers. Maxwell stool, £960 (excluding 1.75 metres of fabric), Clock House Furniture. Mirrorworld makes bespoke, leather-framed mirrors, price on request

In search of a larger house in which to raise their two sons, Sarah and Sean Mason scoured the Herefordshire countryside around Ross-on-Wye, where the couple had both grown up. After looking at a selection of cottages, it was a down-at-heel stone farmhouse that eventually caught their eye. 'The property had been used for holiday lets, so it was very tired,' Sarah recalls. 'But we had a vision of how the place could be restored, so we decided to go for it.'

Having renovated their previous home, a small barn conversion, Sarah and Sean had learnt valuable lessons when it came to refurbishing the farmhouse. 'Exposing all the beams, brick and stone, as we'd done in the barn, made it difficult to keep it clean,' says Sarah. 'It also had an open-plan layout. That was great for parties, but now the boys were older, we felt that separate spaces would suit us better.'

As a result, the farmhouse has a very different look from the barn. The only partition wall the Masons removed was between the kitchen and dining room, while the couple retained the cluster of utility spaces, including a pantry and boot room. ▶

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surrounding the new kitchen-diner. 'Sean and I love to cook, so we invested more thought into designing the kitchen than any other part of the house,' Sarah explains. 'As the room has both two doors and two windows, there's not a lot of wall space, especially as I wanted both an Aga and a modern range cooker.' To overcome these constraints, all the units have been ingeniously designed, and feature a handy pull-out larder and built-in dishwashers, as well as a concealed ironing board, chopping boards and scales.

With a background in textile design, visual impact was one of Sarah's top priorities, so the renovation paid equal attention to the smaller details, such as skirting boards, architraves, windows, doors, cornices and banister rails, as well as the much larger tasks of updating the kitchen and bathrooms. 'It's down ▶

DESIGN ADVICE

'To get a seamless look in the kitchen, the same company built not only the ash and walnut cabinetry but the floor and window frames,too'

KITCHEN

Most of the appliances are built into the units, leaving the scheme sleek and practical. Bespoke cabinetry, handcrafted ash flooring and traditional sash windows, all price on application, Sabin Designs. Dwell's low-backed padded bar stool, £99, is a match for this design

DINING AREA
Solid-wood furniture teamed with chrome-framed seating echoes the style of the kitchen's breakfast bar. **Chairs**, £450 each, Andrew Martin. **Table**, I & J L Brown; the company's Farmhouse taper leg, £1,650, has this look

STUDY
Sarah's love of depth and texture is perfectly illustrated, here. **Desk**, £1,200, Nash Interiors. Walls painted in **Dead Salmon**, £29.50 for 2.5 litres, Farrow & Ball

Storemags.com

HALL
A striped rug runs the length of the flagstone floor. **Runner**, £108 per linear metre, Roger Oates. **Rajapur flock wallpaper**, £160 per roll, Cole & Son. Maroque sells similar Moorish-style ball **lamps** in a silver finish, £72 each

BATHROOM
'We scoured the internet for ideas and thought that this wooden suite looked beautiful,' says Sarah. Geo single bath, £3,670; **Geo basin**, £670; **Teak tiles**, £160 per sq m, all William Garvey. **Bamboo/grass wallpaper**, £130 per roll, Nobilis

to Sarah that our home is full of ingenious design solutions,' says Sean. 'She's always tried to think outside the box and together we came up with some radical decisions, such as opting for a wooden bath and basin, and using a Moorish balcony as a divider between our bedroom and the dressing area. These quirky elements have made such a huge difference.'

Sarah agrees: 'As I don't often design textiles now that I'm a mum, I had fun working with craftsmen who like to try out unusual things.' These style statements include reworking the newel post on the stairs to match the base of a Turkish lantern hanging overhead, and papering the bathroom in bamboo. Sarah's schemes also feature the colours she's naturally drawn to, such as warm saffrons and oranges, as well as tactile silky textures and shiny surfaces.

With the work complete, and the house looking sparkling and new, the Masons can relax in their chic rural retreat. 'We've put down roots here,' Sarah enthuses. 'It's the home we always dreamt of.'

BOOT ROOM
In contrast with the modern furnishings found elsewhere in the farmhouse, its rear entrance has a solid, agricultural look. Elemental is a good source of vintage **work benches**, price on application

storewide.com

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GUEST BEDROOM

Traditionally-styled panelling provides a dramatic backdrop to the modern, wallmounted fireplace. Hallidays specialises in custom-made **wall panelling**, price on request. For an alternative hole-in-the-wall **fireplace**, take a look at the Blade, from £1,500, CVO

MASTER BEDROOM

The wooden fretwork, which partially conceals the dressing area, was originally a balcony that the couple brought back from North Africa. Gracia by Eijffinger, £98 per roll, Wallpaper Direct, is also a large-scale **damask print** in a vivid colourway of orange and gold

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Set within a 400-acre estate in the beautiful Dartmoor National Park in the heart of Devon, Bovey Castle is a luxurious five-star country house hotel with a fascinating history. Built as an Edwardian manor, it now combines the vibrant, friendly atmosphere of a stately home from the last century with the modern facilities of an international resort. All in all, it's the perfect place for a glamorous yet relaxing stay.

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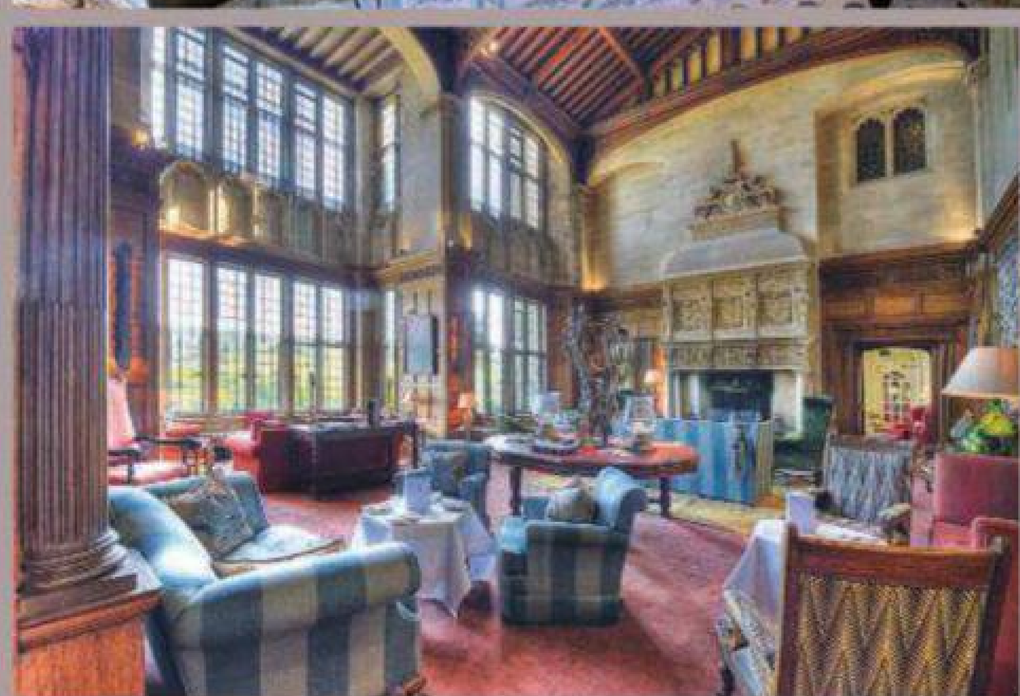

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HOME TRUTHS

THE OWNERS
Tracie Jarvis, who runs two design companies, and her partner, Olivier Post, a chef and events coordinator

THEIR HOME
Edwardian cottage, built in 1905

LOCATION York

ROOMS Sitting room, dining room, kitchen, two bedrooms, bathroom

PURCHASED 2002

PREVIOUS PROPERTY
'Before this, I lived in a period house nearby,' says Tracie.

SITTING ROOM
A vibrant rug anchors this colourful scheme. Rug, £165, Buckley Carpets. For a similar silk-weave striped **fabric**, take a look at Kasida, £90 per metre, Designers Guild. The Old Cinema sells vintage **club chairs** like this, priced from £750

DREAM SCHEMES

Interior designer Tracie Jarvis loves to try out the latest trends in decor in the pretty period cottage she shares with her partner Olivier Post

FEATURE HEATHER DIXON **PHOTOGRAPHY** COLIN POOLE

KITCHEN
Tracie installed the cabinetry herself, then papered one wall in a bold stripe to add a contemporary finish. Miami Range units, £245 for a 600 x 600cm base unit, Symphony Kitchens. **Harlequin Barcode wallpaper**, £43 per roll, The Design House. Walls painted in **Kashmir Beige** chalky emulsion, £20 for 2.5 litres, Craig & Rose

SITTING ROOM
Sculptural lamps and ceramics make an impressive display. Table lamp, from a selection at Christopher Wray; its Unaka, £450, has this look

Tracie Jarvis readily admits to being a serial house mover. Her family relocated 20 times while she was growing up and Tracie had single-handedly renovated six homes of her own by the time she bought this cottage in York. So no-one was more surprised than Tracie herself when she decided to put down roots and stay in the place she calls her 'oasis', a home she now shares with her partner Olivier Post.

'I love the sense of achievement you get after updating a property, but it requires a lot of energy,' Tracie explains. 'I also have two interior design businesses to run, so I thought it was high time to settle down. Although I love to travel and always keep myself busy, the cottage is a haven. It's one of a small row in a cul-de-sac, which is well off the

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DECORATING TIP Original art is to a room – make a statement with a large

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DINING ROOM
This button-upholstered seating has classic appeal. **Hunt Roy chairs**, £360 each, The Design House. Feature wall painted in **Oval Room Blue** emulsion, £29.50 for 2.5 litres, Farrow & Ball. **Coppice wallpaper**, £34 per roll, Prestigious Textiles

beaten track. My neighbours are fantastic and there's a strong community spirit here, which is quite rare in the middle of a city.'

But staying put hasn't stopped Tracie from ringing the changes. In the past eight years, she has not only renovated the property from top to bottom, but also decorated the dining room three times and the sitting room twice. 'I like schemes to evolve,' she says. 'Through my business, I'm always discovering new fabrics and wallpapers that I want to use in my own house, so nothing remains the same for long.'

Tracie sold her last house within a week of putting it on the market, so she had to sleep on a friend's floor for two months before contracts were exchanged on the cottage and she could finally move in. 'I started the revamp two days after arriving, beginning with the bathroom, because I wanted somewhere to relax and enjoy a long soak at the end of the day,' says Tracie, who did most of the plumbing ▶

affordable, individual and adds personality modern painting or groups of ceramics'

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GUEST BEDROOM
Tracie's love of symmetry is clearly in evidence in this bedroom. David Hunt table lamps, £135 each; **Clarissa Hulse bedlinen**, £85 for a duvet cover, all The Design House. **Kildare mirrors**, £159 each, Oka. **Zoffany Elementi wallpaper**, £72 per roll

DESIGN ADVICE 'Smaller rooms are ideal the bank – if you've only one window to

herself. 'For the next three weeks, I stood in a washing-up bowl to shower, using a pipe coming out of the wall attached to a mixer. It was a feat of endurance,' recalls Tracie. 'The wind used to howl through a gap in the wall where the loo had been, so it was freezing as well.'

After the bathroom was finished, it took Tracie months to strip the rest of the Edwardian cottage right back, before rewiring and replumbing throughout, as well as supporting sagging floor joists, installing French windows in the sitting room and exposing its brick fireplace. She then had to replaster the entire house. But Tracie remained undeterred by the upheaval. 'I love DIY, although it can be quite tough coming home and starting again after a day of renovating other people's houses,' she says. 'At least I didn't have to cook, as Ollie's a great chef. He only complained once, when we were due to

BATHROOM
Layers of natural colours and textures create an elegant Colonial look. Palm Leaves wallpaper, £55 per roll, Cole & Son. Curtain made up in **Casamance Côté Lin**, £52 per sq m, The Design House

DESIGN TIP
'In the bathroom, I stripped out all the pine cladding, which made the space look like a Swedish sauna,' says Tracie. 'Then I replumbed the fixtures in order to have the freestanding bath underneath the window.'

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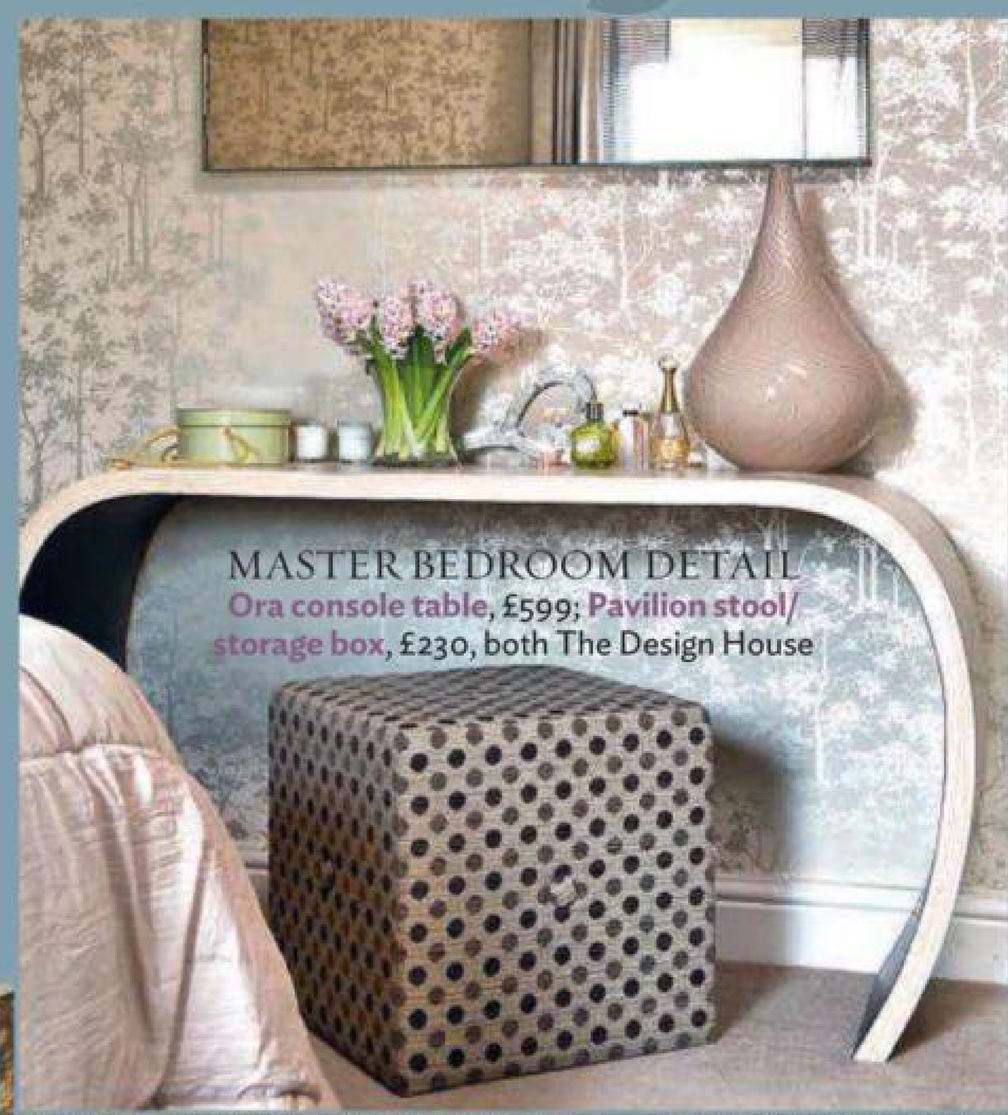
for creating an opulent look without breaking dress, you can afford to splash out a bit'

entertain, but everything from the kitchen had been packed up in the dining room. We were up until 3am getting things back to normal.'

When it came to the decor, Tracie likes to use natural textures and colours to create layered and sumptuous schemes. 'I tend to buy pieces I really love because I know they'll work together,' she says. 'I especially wanted an opulent bedroom, which is why I chose a shimmering wallpaper and lots of velvet. I can also afford to buy more expensive fabrics, because the house isn't particularly big.'

The final room to be renovated was the kitchen, which was completed recently. But it's unlikely to stay the same for long. 'I like to keep the house looking fresh and interesting,' says Tracie. 'Much as I love it as it is, I'm itching to try out new textiles and accessories. This place will always keep evolving – it's the next best thing to moving.'



MASTER BEDROOM DETAIL
Ora console table, £599; **Pavilion stool/storage box**, £230, both The Design House

MASTER BEDROOM
Papering the walls in two colourways of the same design is an inspired idea. **Mandara wallpaper**, £47 per roll, Osborne & Little. **Mirrored bedside tables**, £140 each; **silk duvet cover**, £175, all The Design House

FOR STOCKIST DETAILS **GO TO PAGE 152**

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BRIGHT IDEAS

IN SAXON GROGAN AND GORDON BELL'S NEW-BUILD, THERE IS DEFINITELY NO SHORTAGE OF INSPIRATION – OR COLOUR

FEATURE HAZEL DOLAN **PHOTOGRAPHY** BRENT DARBY

DINING AREA
A mix of designer chairs are set around the table. 'Our friends choose their favourite to sit on,' says Saxon.
Tolix H low stool in orange-lacquered steel, £103; **Tolix A chair in varnished raw steel**, £164, both Made In Design. **A-16 bentwood chair** in Green, £99, The Conran Shop. **Filing cabinet**, Chic-Antique. The **Fluoro orange pendant light** by Tom Dixon, £420, is available at Heal's

HOME TRUTHS

THE OWNERS Saxon Grogan, an interior stylist, and his partner Gordon Bell, who works in banking
THEIR HOME Detached townhouse, built in 2006
LOCATION Tyne & Wear
ROOMS Hall, sitting room, kitchen-diner, utility room, cloakroom, library, study, four bedrooms, dressing room, three bathrooms
PURCHASED 2007
PREVIOUS PROPERTIES 'Our last place was a new-build in Newcastle,' says Saxon. 'Prior to that, we renovated a flat just across the Tyne.'

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SITTING ROOM
'This space is quite narrow,' says Saxon, 'so we had to juggle the furniture to make it look wider.' The three-seater **leather sofa** is by Habitat: its Finn design, from £1,750, has this look. **Grande Britannia map cushion**, £54, RE

Saxon Grogan has always loved a challenge and his Tyneside townhouse is a case in point. 'I like to knock a place about a bit and see how it reacts,' he says.

True to form, as soon as Saxon and his partner Gordon Bell picked up the keys to their latest home near Newcastle, a contemporary, three-storey new-build, the couple set to work on gutting the property, ready for a radical redesign.

Out went every scrap of faux period detail, along with a host of mocha and chocolate fabrics, carpets and an uninspiring kitchen. Saxon and Gordon were after something altogether lighter and more optimistic in feel. 'Because this building stands like a tower in the street, our starting point for the revamp was the look of a lighthouse,' Saxon explains. 'The proportions here are quite generous so we wanted to play to the house's strengths and make the most of its position, elevation and natural light levels.'

The biggest problem for the pair was that the layout had little sense of flow. 'We like our living areas to be adaptable,' says Saxon. 'But when we bought the house, the rooms were all quite boxy, with heavy mouldings and skirting.' In due course, all ▶

KITCHEN-DINER
The trolley can be wheeled closer to the table when the couple are entertaining. **Flytta stainless-steel trolley**, £99, Ikea. **Rubber flooring**, £31 per 680 x 680mm tile, Dalsouple

SITTING ROOM
Saxon reupholstered the Ercol chair. To learn more about Saxon's upcycled **furniture**, visit Saxongrogan.com. **Waste Not Want Not fabric**, £16 per metre, RE. **Fluoro table lamp** by Tom Dixon, £584, Made in Design

INSPIRATION

'What we've done here is definitely unconventional – modern houses come complete with a checklist of "desirable" specifications, but they all seem so constricting. Why limit yourself to what you can achieve?'

STUDY
Shelving left over from the library makes ideal storage for Saxon's paperwork. Expedit shelving units, £32 each; Vika Artur trestles, £20 each; Vika Amon table top, from £8, all Ikea. Vitra Dax armchair by Charles and Ray Eames, £250, Heal's

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FOR STOCKIST DETAILS GO TO PAGE 152

LIBRARY/SNUG
Saxon found the vintage library steps in a local antiques shop. Original House stocks similar **ladders**, around £180. Bespoke **shutters**, from £400 each, Hillarys. **Jack plastic floor lamp** by Tom Dixon, £280, Heal's

the newly installed fittings were stripped out. 'We removed cupboards and the kitchen, and moved the staircase in order to bring in as much light as possible,' recalls Saxon.

On the first floor, four small rooms were knocked together to create an open-plan sitting room and kitchen-diner, designed around a new centrally located staircase. Saxon was determined to create a practical cooking zone, which features freestanding furniture, stainless-steel surfaces and rubber flooring. 'It's a proper catering kitchen,' he says. 'The steel worktops scratch and mark easily, but that simply adds to the character of the space.'

Above the entertainment area, one bedroom was turned into a dressing room, while another acts as a study. Eventually the couple plan to convert the loft. In the meantime, the original ground-floor living space has become a library-cum-snug.

Once the remodelling was complete, Saxon and Gordon painted the house entirely in white. 'Used in the right way, this colour creates depth and subtlety,' Saxon says. The neutral palette also acts as a foil to the pair's offbeat collection of furnishings. 'We're drawn to objects that add a bit of soul to our home,' says Saxon. 'We like to live with things a little and see how they affect the space, before reinterpreting them.'

Such a full-scale redesign may be unusual for a new-build, but the couple's confident approach has paid off handsomely. 'The house is perfectly reflective of our style,' says Saxon. 'Despite the mess and upheaval, we'd do it all again just to achieve the same result.'

MASTER BEDROOM
An inherited kitchen table fits snugly into the alcove. **Mr Impossible chair** by Philippe Starck, £230, Heal's. Vintage **French bottle dryer**, RE. For an alternative geometrically styled **rug**, take a look at the Medina, £1,615, Made in Design

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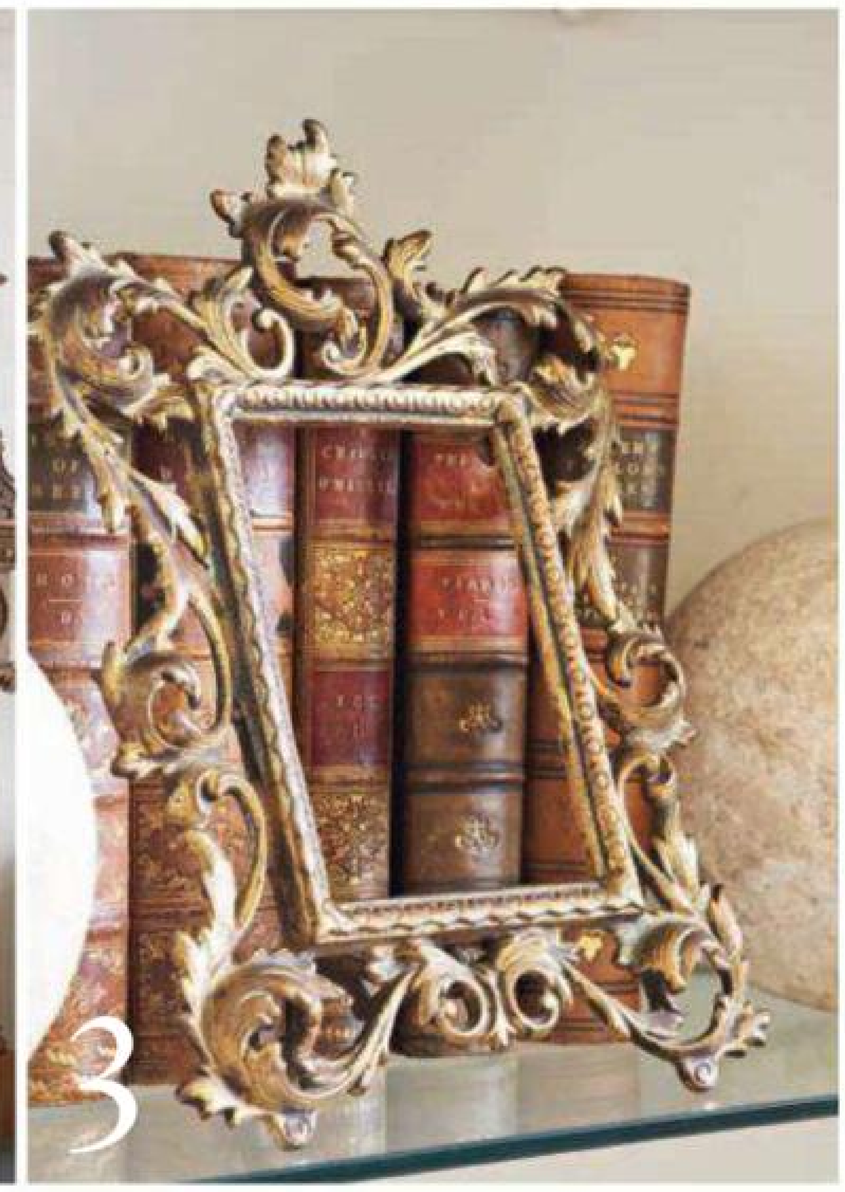

CRAFTED WITH CARE

A well-chosen selection of fine furniture and accessories gives Katherine and Rupert North's Victorian home its bespoke finish

FEATURE FAITH ECKERSALL ✤ **PHOTOGRAPHY** NICK CARTER

1, 2, 3 & 6 SITTING ROOM
The fireplace was installed by the developer. 'It's reproduction, and I've thought about chipping bits off to age it, but the colour does work with the rest of the scheme,' says Katherine. Hanging above the mantel is a portrait of one of Rupert's ancestors, the former Prime Minister, Lord North. For period-style fire surrounds, take a look at the Kingsbury, £600, Victorian Fireplaces. Brights of Nettlebed offers a selection of solid-oak sideboards; its Pippy Oak design, £2,500, has this look. Source equally ornate picture frames, £450 for a 19th-century design, at Bay Hall Antiques. Gloucester sofa, price on request, Settle, covered in Jahangir in Sand, £42 per metre, Andrew Martin. Bonaparte urn lamps, £325 each; shades, £90 each, all Katherine North Design

4, 5 & 7 DINING ROOM
Placing a traditional console table sits opposite a more modern dining table for contrast. Traditional console table, £1,350; modern console table, from £1,000; Mende table lamps (on traditional console), £175 each; St Paul Moyenne table lamps (on modern console), £245 each, all Katherine North Design. Similar wallpaper, Eltham Vine, £45 per roll, Sanderson. The Bellman, £350, Nordic Style, is a comparable dining chair

6

HOME TRUTHS

THE OWNERS Katherine North, an interior stylist and online retailer, her husband Rupert, who runs a sports business, their son James and Rupert's son, Casper
THEIR HOME Section of a Victorian mansion
LOCATION East Sussex
ROOMS Hall, sitting room, dining room, kitchen, utility room, playroom, office, four bedrooms, two bathrooms
PURCHASED 2005
PREVIOUS PROPERTY 'Before moving here, we owned part of a large house in Kent,' says Katherine.

7

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BEST BUY 'I found the Thai screen hanging in our guest bedroom in an antiques shop – it was conceived as a decorative feature for a ceiling, but I used it once as my stand's backdrop at an interior design show, and could have sold it 100 times over!'

Having been built as the residence of a Victorian gentleman, the handsome mansion in East Sussex that Katherine and Rupert North call their home has been through several incarnations during its lifetime. Converted into a hotel and then a convent, the building was eventually bought by a developer, who turned the place into six separate dwellings.

Katherine, however, initially had doubts as to whether the house would be suitable. 'I didn't like the sound of the development at all,' she admits. 'But the estate agent insisted the place was worth a viewing – in fact, he drove us here to see it. From the back, it seemed smaller than I'd hoped but inside, the rooms had generous proportions and beautiful windows with a stunning outlook.'

Another plus point was that the property was in tip-top condition. 'The owner was a lovely lady who had maintained and kept it beautifully,' says Katherine. Realising the house would make a marvellous home for their sons James and Casper, Katherine and Rupert put in a bid, which proved successful.

Once the couple had made the property theirs, Katherine decided to update its decor. 'The schemes featured lots of greys, which I think dampen the spirit,' she says. So apart from the dark-charcoal wallpaper in the dining room, Katherine painted the walls in a selection of neutral hues. 'Although I haven't consciously stuck to one theme, many of the rooms are in off-white tones, with depth and texture added by way of the accessories,' she points out. 'Most of these are in navy or a tobacco brown, which is a colour combination that works brilliantly. I like a strong look and these more masculine shades seem to suit the building.' Oversized gilt or painted mirrors and French unbleached oak table lamps are further evidence of Katherine's signature style, with the lamps proving so popular with her friends that she has recently started selling similar items online. 'Good lighting can have such a positive effect on you and your guests,' she says. 'Wherever possible, I try to use dimmers to create the right atmosphere.'

As well as Katherine's eye for classic design, she's also a firm believer in improving inherited fixtures and fittings rather than ripping them out and starting again. 'The kitchen cabinetry and the bathroom sanitaryware was not necessarily what I'd have chosen, but it's good quality and we'd never throw pieces out just for the sake of it,' explains Katherine. 'Instead, I've introduced a few little visual tricks that I hope might deceive the senses.' For example, floating shelves have been hung above the kitchen cupboards to help increase the sense of height in the room, and to distract attention from the wall tiles, which are not really to Katherine's taste. Similarly in the bathroom, she has painted the rippled, glazed tiles with weathered gloss to give a smoother finish.

'Even though we inherited a great base to work on, we've tried to improve the house as much as we can,' says Katherine. 'I wanted to make our guests, as well as the family, feel welcome and to give everyone something interesting to look at.' An objective this clever decorator has carried off with aplomb.

1 KITCHEN/BREAKFAST ROOM
Rupert revived the chairs with a lick of paint. To recreate the look of this furniture, team a Liatorp table, £179, Ikea, with a set of Tullgam chairs, £695 each, Nordic Style

2 LANDING
Assorted accessories create a pretty scene. The Stockholm sofa, from £1,117, Scumble Goosie, is another wooden bench

3 BATHROOM
Katherine fixed mirrored tiles to the bath panel to add a sense of glamour. Walls And Floors sells mirrored tiles, £1.25 each. Walls painted in Stone 1 emulsion, £29.50 for 2.5 litres, Paint & Paper Library

4 MASTER BEDROOM
The unusual carvings hanging above the bed were found at Ardingly Antiques Fair. For details of the next Ardingly Fair, visit Iacf.co.uk. The Emily armchair, £1,000, Homes Direct 365, is an alternative rattan design

5 GUEST BEDROOM
More of Katherine's lamps adorn this suite. Lodeve lamps, £165 each, Katherine North

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4

5

SHOPPING IDEAS

ETHNIC & CRAFT ACCESSORIES

Buddha head on wooden base, £95, Trading Boundaries

Round wicker tray, £9, Joanna Wood

Weathered-oak table lamp and shade, £200, Sterling Furniture

FOR STOCKIST DETAILS **GO TO PAGE 152**

ALL WHITE NOW

NATALIE PADDICK UPDATED HER REGENCY PROPERTY USING CLASSIC PALE SHADES

FEATURE VICTORIA JENKINS **PHOTOGRAPHY** WILL GODDARD

HOME TRUTHS

- **THE OWNER** Natalie Paddick, who runs a jewellery design business
- **HER HOME** Regency townhouse
- **LOCATION** Bath
- **ROOMS** Sitting room, dining room, kitchen, cloakroom, three bedrooms, bathroom, shower room, self-contained one-bedroom basement flat
- **PURCHASED** 2006
- **PREVIOUS PROPERTY** 'Before moving here, I lived in a former rectory in Somerset,' says Natalie.

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FIRST-FLOOR SITTING ROOM

Natalie painted the walls and ceiling in white and used the same shade on some of the furniture.
White Mist and Pure White emulsion, £16.98 for 2.5 litres, Dulux.
Aubusson rug, £1,500, John Lewis.
Painting, £450, Eric Gabb

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SITTING ROOM
'I collect a lot of silver, including inexpensive silver plate, as it looks so beautiful with the soft whites and greys,' says Natalie. For a wide range of antique silverware, take a look at Sellingantiques.co.uk. Sofa, £850, Laura Ashley. Mirror, £65, Rossiters of Bath

As fate would have it, around the same time that Natalie Paddick bought a four-storey townhouse in Bath, her mother decided to sell her own property and move to Barbados, offering Natalie much of the contents in the process. Before she knew it, three removal vans had arrived.

'Most of my mother's pieces are antique, so it was wonderful,' says Natalie, a jewellery designer. 'But her house was three times the size of mine, so every one of my rooms was filled to the brim in no time at all.'

Natalie began to whittle things down by weeding out the non-essentials. 'Old top hats and bowler hats, knife sharpeners, dolls' houses, wardrobes and Victorian chairs went at the first sweep,' she recalls. 'The charity shops in Bath were full of my childhood memories. Everything was of excellent quality, but I just didn't have room for it all.'

However, the arrival of her mother's collection of antiques provided the ideal opportunity to improve the charming Regency terraced house that Natalie had just purchased, complete with original fireplaces, high ceilings and cornicing, sash windows and deep skirting boards.

'Despite the bijou rooms, the house was very light,' she says. 'But there was work to be done, including the repair of every sash window and the removal of an enormous boiler, which I replaced with a condensing boiler in the basement.' Natalie also took up the concrete flooring in the ▶

KITCHEN
Natalie asked a local joiner to make the cabinetry for her. Plastic storage jars, £5 each; pink outdoor lights, £22.45, all Cargo Home

DINING ROOM

Natalie sourced several antique pieces, including the dining table, from a local dealer. **Extending dining table**, £800; **dining chairs**, £195 each; **chandelier**, £395; all Hennessy Antiques & Collectables. **Dresser**, £1,000, Rossiters of Bath

INSPIRATION

'I like 1920s interior designer Syrie Maugham's style. She was married to writer W Somerset Maugham and found fame for her glamorous white rooms'

DESIGN TIP

'Paint old wood furniture in varying shades of white and grey – sometimes distressing them – and you can completely transform an otherwise dark room,' says Natalie

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BATHROOM
Natalie painted a verdigris metal basket and hung it on the wall above the bath. Metal basket, £35, White Living. B&Q's Duchess, £370, is a similar roll-top bath

hall, lower stairs and basement, and instead bought stone tiles, laid on the diagonal, as well as adding wooden shutters to all the windows.

There were some surprises in store, too, as underneath the raised parquet flooring in the kitchen and dining room, Natalie found original light oak boards, which she sanded and polished. 'After those improvements, I took stock and found I was looking at a huge mixture of dark mahogany, oak and maple furniture, which was very beautiful, but made the rooms look so overcrowded,' she explains. 'So I had a eureka moment. Taking inspiration from the 1920s interior designer Syrie Maugham, who favoured white schemes, I decided to sand and paint nearly every piece of antique furniture.' Determined to do it herself, it took Natalie nearly two years to complete the task.

At the same time, she began painting the interior. 'Fortunately, my mother visited several times and helped me. We stuck to a light palette, choosing greys below the dado rails and white above, which is a formula that has served the house well,' says Natalie. 'Often we were working from early in the morning until late at night – looking back, I'm not sure quite how we did it!'

Having finally completed the project, Natalie couldn't be happier with the result and is delighted to have given so many antique pieces a new lease of life in a brand new setting. 'This house is so special to me, because it reflects my mother's great sense of style. I've been only too glad to recycle her possessions and make them my own.'

LAST WORD 'The idea was to declutter and bring out the elegance of the property, without being too precious'

MASTER BEDROOM
A striking Gothic-inspired iron bed takes centre stage. Gothic iron bed, £1,400, Beddy Buys

FOR STOCKIST DETAILS GO TO PAGE 152

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NOTE OF APPROVAL

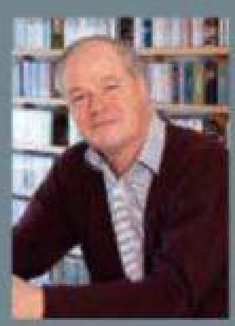
RONALD CORP AND JOHN GLASS CAN'T HELP BUT SING THE PRAISES OF THEIR TOP-STOREY MUSIC ROOM

FEATURE AND PHOTOGRAPHY LIZ ARTINDALE

HOME TRUTHS

- **THE OWNERS** Ronald Corp, who is a composer and conductor, and John Glass, an art historian
- **THEIR HOME** Grade II listed 18th-century converted watermill
- **LOCATION** Essex
- **ROOMS** Hall, sitting room, drawing room, kitchen-diner, utility room, two studies, music room, four bedrooms (one en suite), two bathrooms
- **BUILT** 2004
- **PREVIOUS PROPERTY** 'Before moving here, we lived in a large garden flat in London,' says Ronald.

MUSIC ROOM
Modern furnishings look perfectly at home in this 18th-century setting. Long Island sofa, armchair and **ottoman**, from £2,600 the set, the Les Provinciales collection at Roche Bobois. **Metallic Squares cushions**, £15 each, John Lewis



As founder and director of an orchestra in London, Ronald Corp maintains a busy schedule of concerts, tours and recording sessions. Although the home he shared in the capital with his partner John Glass served him well for many years, Ronald is also a composer and yearned for a more contemplative space. 'Our flat in the city was lovely, but I found it hard to completely switch off,' he says.

In due course, the pair went to see a Grade II listed, converted watermill in rural Essex, with good rail links back to London. 'We were immediately sold,' Ronald recalls. The owner had spent 12 years meticulously restoring and preserving the building, but he had yet to refurbish the loft, and Ronald instantly knew it would make the perfect music room. 'The space was huge and could easily house my collection of more than 15,000 LPs and CDs,' he says. The room's position was also impressive. 'Each window has a view towards the valleys and woodland beyond or over the river,' Ronald enthuses.

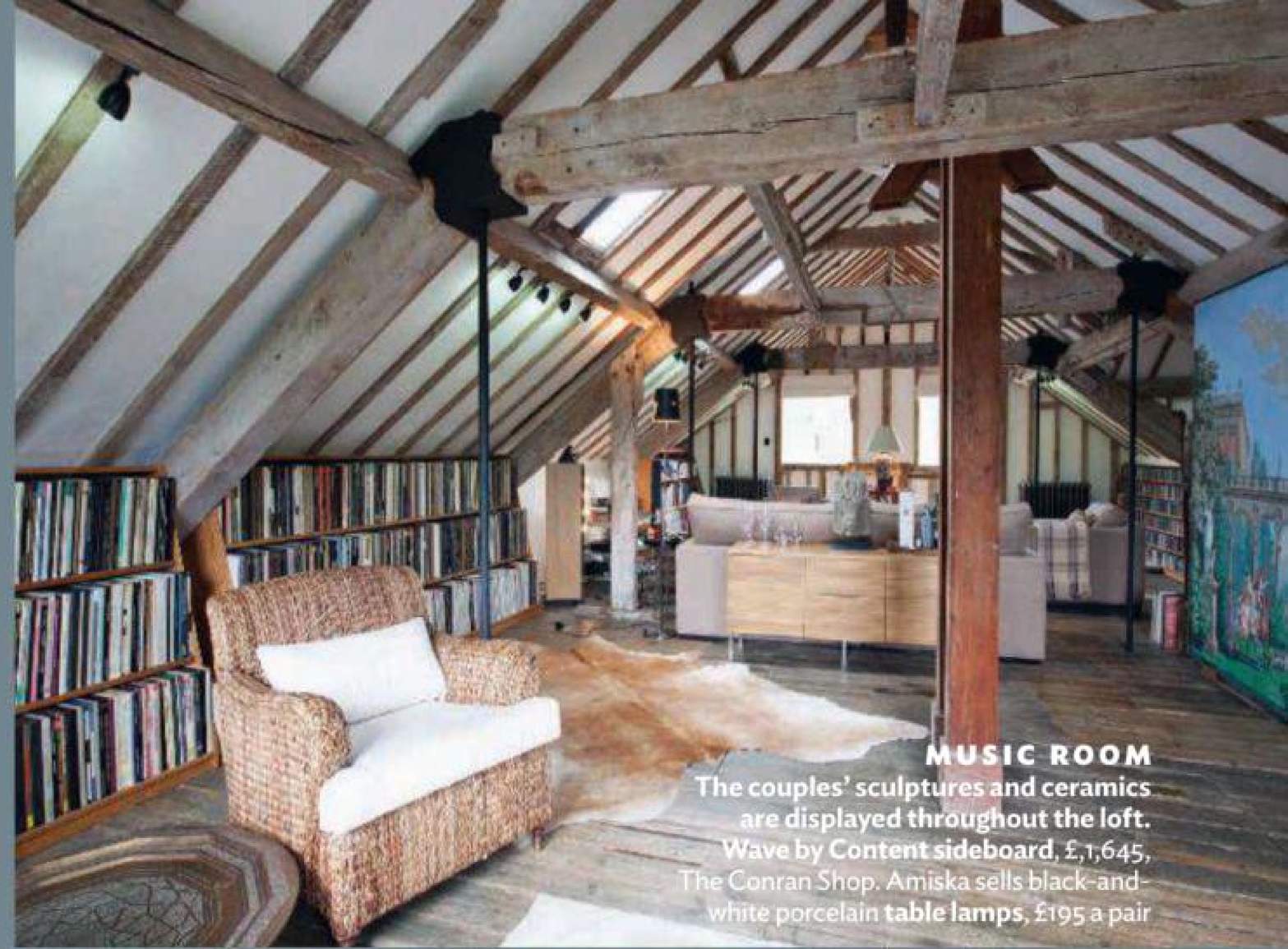
FAVOURITE FEATURE

'The river that runs besides the mill is mesmerising – I look down on it first thing every morning and last thing at night'

The couple wasted no time in making the place theirs, then drew up plans to convert the top floor. 'It was accessed via some steps,' says John, 'so our architect designed an extension to the staircase that runs through the rest of the building. Glass balustrades at the top of the stairs create a wide-open feel that strikes you as soon as you enter the loft.'

Bespoke oak shelving fitted in between the ceiling and wall beams now stores Ronald's music and scores. But that wasn't the loft's only purpose. 'We wanted the room to be comfortable as well as practical, so it's also an additional sitting room where we can relax and entertain,' says Ronald.

And the couple have no shortage of guests visiting at weekends to share their idyllic rural retreat. 'At night, when I get off the train, I can't wait to admire the stars on my walk home to the mill,' Ronald reflects. 'It feels like a million miles from the city.' 25



MUSIC ROOM
The couples' sculptures and ceramics are displayed throughout the loft. Wave by Content sideboard, £1,645, The Conran Shop. Amiska sells black-and-white porcelain **table lamps**, £195 a pair

KITCHEN-DINER
'The table dominates the room, but it works for us,' says Ronald. Table, £495, Antique Kitchen Tables. Camargue chairs, £130 each, Oka

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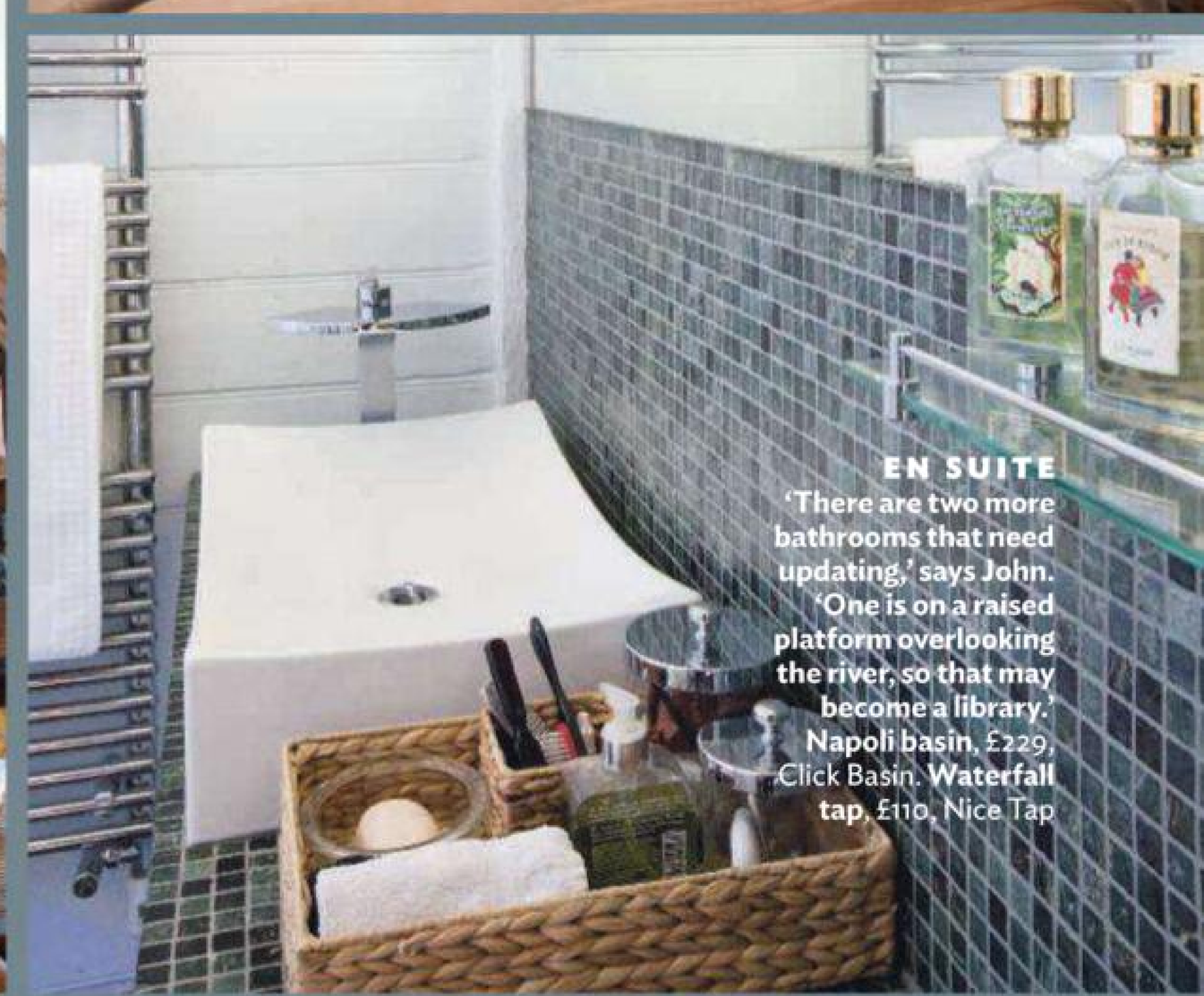
SITTING ROOM
'I use this Victorian gramophone to listen to my 78s,' says Ronald. Gramophone player, price on request, The Talking Machine. **Arts and Crafts bookcase**, £1,400, Liberty

DRAWING ROOM
The chaise was bought from The Royal College of Art final year show. Barker & Stonehouse offers a selection of contemporary **chaise longues**, from £949

GUEST BEDROOM
The neighbour's cat often pops in to enjoy the afternoon sun. **Timolin cast-iron bedstead**, from £379, Deans Furnishers



EN SUITE
'There are two more bathrooms that need updating,' says John. 'One is on a raised platform overlooking the river, so that may become a library.' Napoli basin, £229, Click Basin. **Waterfall tap**, £110, Nice Tap

FOR STOCKIST DETAILS **GO TO PAGE 152**

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REGAL SETTING

SITTING/DINING ROOM

'Out of all the schemes in the house, this one comes closest to the idea of what a castle interior should look like,' Lizanne says. Dining table, £2,150; **chairs**, £150 each; **chandelier**, £560; **cushions**, £20 to £50 each; **curtains**, price on request; **curtain poles**, £130 each; **curtain tie-backs**, £45 each, all Dardis Design & Interiors

LIZANNE AND KEN ALLEN DESCRIBE THEIR 15TH-CENTURY CASTLE AS AN ORDINARY FAMILY HOME, BUT THIS AMAZING BUILDING IS SURELY A CUT ABOVE THE NORM

FEATURE & PHOTOGRAPHY BARBARA EGAN/REPORTAGE

HOME TRUTHS

THE OWNERS Lizanne Allen, who runs an interior design company, her husband Ken, director of a hire business, and their children Vicki, Rebecca Kate, Joanne, Amber and Gareth, plus Mother, Baby, Honey and Simba the cats

THEIR HOME Tower house, built in 1462 with later additions

LOCATION County Meath

ROOMS Hall, sitting/dining room, kitchen/breakfast room, family room, utility room, six bedrooms, four bathrooms

PURCHASED 1987

PREVIOUS PROPERTY 'Before we bought the tower, we lived in a small stone cottage nearby,' says Lizanne.

'People seem surprised when they first come to visit us, as the common perception of people who own a castle is that they're members of the aristocracy,' says Lizanne Allen. 'But we're just a normal family and this is a family home. The only difference is that here, there's a lot more housework to do,' she adds with a smile. Not that Lizanne and her husband Ken have ever been afraid of some hard graft, for the couple have spent much of the past two decades restoring this 500-year-old tower house in County Meath, including its 17th- and 18th-century additions.

'When we first came to see the place, we weren't looking for a castle, or anything like it,' Lizanne admits. But with a proposed motorway threatening the stone cottage that the Allens ▶

DESIGN TIP
Lizanne drew up plans for the kitchen herself, then hand-stencilled the cabinetry to give the units an individual touch. 'I kept everything as simple as possible, so that the scheme doesn't date,' she explains.

FAVOURITE ROOM 'Our kitchen is for cooking and eating, of course, however it's an extremely social space, too – the room is sunny in summer and toasty and warm in winter, thanks to the Aga'

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KITCHEN/BREAKFAST ROOM

'When we moved in, this part of the house wasn't being used at all,' Lizanne says. 'So relocating the kitchen into the heart of the building seemed like a logical first step.' Cabinetry, from £7,250, designed by Lizanne Allen and installed by Dardis Furniture. **Maple floorboards,** £40 per sq m, TC Matthews. For similar weaved **seating**, take sa look at the Sunday 47 chair, £340, Indian Ocean

Storeroom

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BATHROOM

'A turret on the corner of the castle has bathrooms on each floor, but this one is my favourite because of the beautiful double-height original corbelled stone roof,' says Lizanne. Roll-top bath (including taps and fittings), £950; Shires Waverley pedestal basin, £260, both Bathroom World at DPL

INSPIRATION 'We enjoy visiting historic houses, stately homes and even antiquated ruins, because they give us lots of great ideas. We also love long walks and find that the colours of nature are a good starting point for our interior schemes'

GUEST BEDROOM
The green-and-gold quilt adds a touch of luxury. Sibona **quilt**; the company's Fern Raffia embroidered silk, £585 for a king-size quilt, has an equally opulent look. **Cushions**, £15 to £30 each, Dardis Design & Interiors

owned at the time, and with five young children on their hands, the couple decided to look for a modest period house with a little extra room.

Initially, the pair did not fare well, as they were outbid on every property they viewed. Lizanne and Ken were aware that the castle had been on the market for a while, but they had never considered the house's potential. 'It was obvious that it needed specialised attention that few would be competent to tackle,' says Lizanne. 'We went to view the building out of simple curiosity, rather than any intention to buy. But we fell in love with it, because the place is so unusual. We were also fascinated by the challenge of turning it into a proper home.'

And a challenge it certainly was, as parts of the castle were completely uninhabitable, with missing windows and floors. 'The rest was a roost for birds and bats,' Lizanne recalls. Undeterred, Ken took ▶

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LAST WORD 'We're simply the guardians of this house and that's exactly how it should be – the castle has a life of its own and long after we've packed up and gone, the place will still be here'

GUEST BEDROOM
'The colour scheme softens the look of the bare stone wall, and makes the room feel more inviting,' says Lizanne. Toile wallpaper, Busby & Busby; its Pastorale in Rose, £32.50 per roll, is a match. **Bedstead**, £690; **armchair, dressing table** and **stool**, £860 the set; and **armoire**, £735, all Dardis Design & Interiors. The upper two storeys of the castle are available as a holiday let; for details, visit Dardistowncastle.ie

a crash course in stonework, lime plastering and pointing, consulting experts and devouring reference books. 'Ken's hire company already had a lot of the machinery needed to do the work,' says Lizanne. 'So he repointed the entire exterior and replastered the interior single-handedly.

'Once the structure was watertight and secure, we made do with whatever we'd inherited,' Lizanne continues. 'We repainted the kitchen while saving for a new scheme, and slowly chipped away at other jobs, such as laying new floors and repairing the windows.'

Despite the difficulties, the couple quickly discovered that their quirky home was the perfect setting for family life. 'The children had such fun exploring the turrets and spiral staircases,' says Lizanne. 'This has been the project of a lifetime, but we wouldn't have had it any other way. It just goes to show that one's home really is one's castle!'

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FOR STOCKIST DETAILS GO TO PAGE 152

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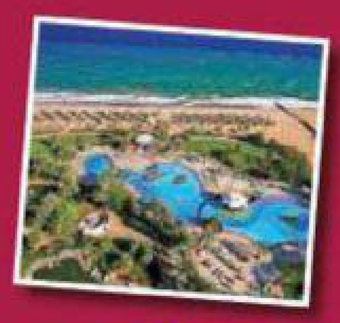

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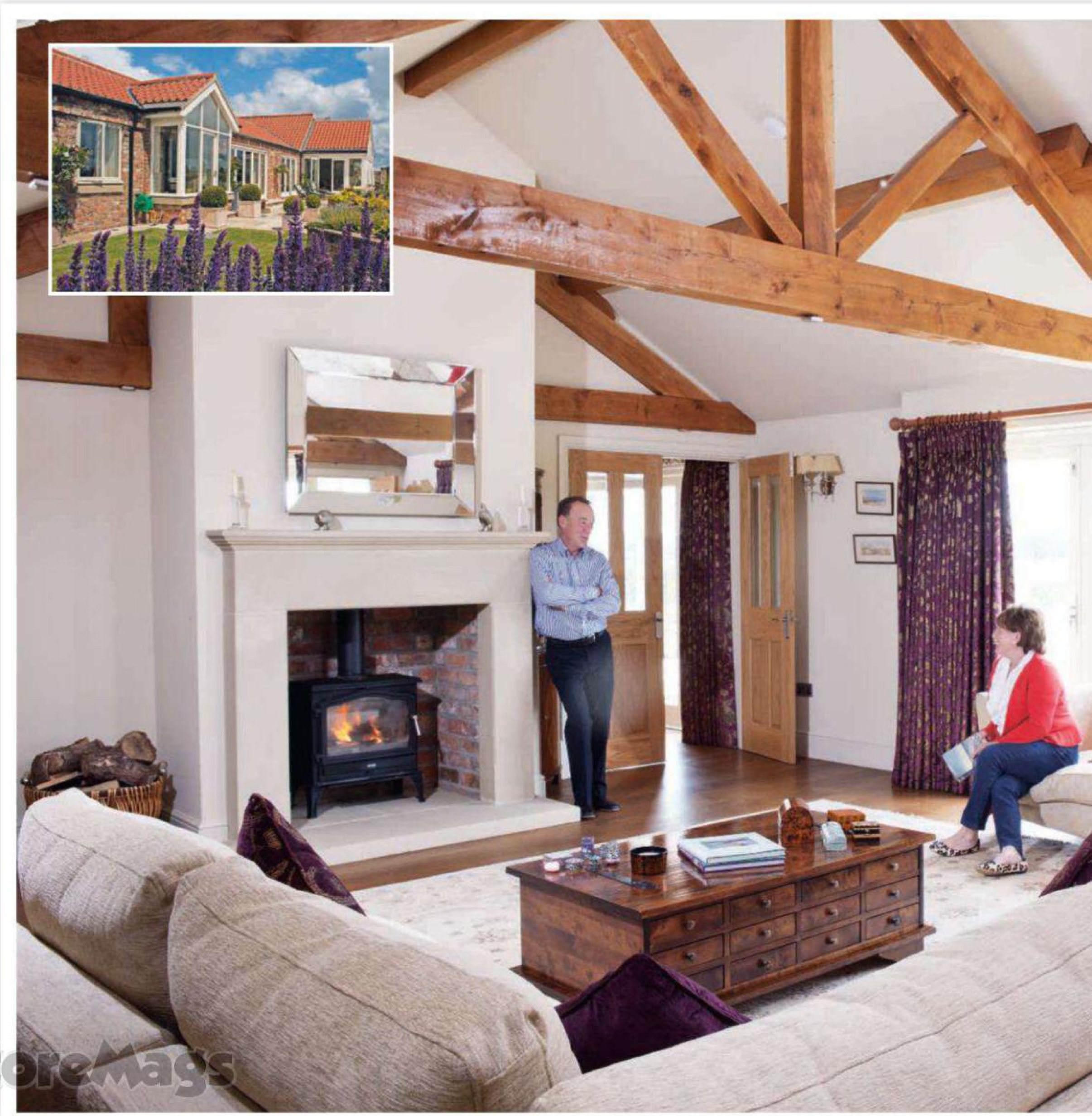
'HAVING OUR FAMILY NEXT DOOR is as good as it gets'



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With their children and grandchildren as neighbours, Janice and Keith Thompson are living on cloud nine

FEATURE HEATHER DIXON
PHOTOGRAPHY DAVID BURTON

HOME TRUTHS

- **THE OWNERS** Janice Thompson and her husband, Keith, who is a partner in a firm of building contractors
- **THEIR HOME** Converted 19th-century barn
- **LOCATION** North Yorkshire
- **ROOMS** Sitting room, dining room, kitchen, utility/boot room, garden room, two bedrooms (both en suite), plus adjoining outbuildings
- **PURCHASED** 2000
- **PREVIOUS PROPERTY** 'Before this, we lived in a three-bedroom, 19th-century former coach house located in a nearby village,' says Janice.

SITTING ROOM
Furniture ranged around the fire creates a cosy atmosphere. Fire surround, £1,000, Rob Pilling Stonecraft. Curtains made up in Monkwell Marrakech, £46 per metre, Barkers. Sofa, £3,000, Multiyork. Garratt 12-drawer coffee table, £600, Laura Ashley

Experienced renovators Janice and Keith Thompson soon grew bored of early retirement and couldn't wait to get stuck into a new project – but neither had bargained for one quite as challenging as a barn conversion, as Janice explains...

What motivated you to embark on another property revamp?
Having moved 13 times in 40 years, all in and around this part of North Yorkshire, Keith and I were looking forward to taking it easy, especially since our children, Paul and Hayley, had both left home. However, our last house was quite small and there was nothing left to do to it. We began to get itchy feet, so we sold the coach house and moved into rented accommodation until we found a suitable property.

Why did you choose this place?
As well as eight acres of land, the plot included a huge cowshed, two grain silos and a Dutch barn. As a builder, Keith instantly saw their potential and knew he could turn them into a series of beautiful homes. So not only ▶

DINING ROOM
The couple's traditional table and chairs look perfectly at home in this contemporary setting. Table, chairs and matching sideboard (out of shot), £2,000, Ellis Furniture. Monkwell Agadir wallpaper, £31.50 per roll, Newts End Interiors

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KITCHEN

'This is the hub of the house,' says Janice. 'The grandchildren are always popping in and out and it's a great spot for getting together with friends.' Ivory-painted **cabinetry** from the Charles Rennie Mackintosh range, £350 for a 600 x 600mm base unit; **Verde Magic granite worktops**, £400 per sq m, all Holme Design. **Bar stools**, £80 each, CB Furnishings

FAVOURITE FEATURE

'Nearly all the rooms are south-facing, so it's always nice and sunny inside, plus we enjoy spectacular views from every window'

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MASTER BEDROOM
'I didn't want to over-furnish here,' says Janice. 'In this case, less is more.' Grosvenor king-size sleigh bed, £1,145; three-drawer bedside chests, £295 each, all Barker and Stonehouse. Sanderson Grandiflora wallpaper, £43 per roll, Newts End Interiors

could we live here, but there was plenty of room for Paul's young family and for Hayley, too.

Who took on the work?
Although Keith is retired, he's still involved in running a building company, so along with some of his colleagues, and with Paul's help, he spent the evenings and weekends remodelling the property. They demolished half the barn, had the silos removed then joined up the remaining part of the barn with its outbuildings.

How long did it take to complete?
Almost five years. In that time, we moved from one finished section to another, and I decorated and furnished the rooms as we went along. Having such a large canvas to work with, I became a bit more radical with my choice of decor, especially the wallpapers. It was a nerve-racking process, though. I'd see a design I really liked and then get cold feet because I didn't want to get it wrong and spoil the whole house. In due course, I learnt how to create mood boards in order to help me make the right decisions.

What other decorating tricks did you pick up along the way?
At first, I tried to choose all the colours and furniture in one go so that everything tied in together, but that approach became too confusing. So I changed tack and concentrated on one room at a time. After that, everything fell into place. I'd also recommend bringing in a designer to get the most out of your kitchen. We drew up a wish-list, but let the kitchen company come up with the actual design. By working together, we achieved everything we wanted.

Do you feel as though you have a sense of fulfilment here?
We've put down roots here and as we run a small farm, we're never short of things to do. Plus, we live with the family, yet enjoy our own space. This is as good as it gets.

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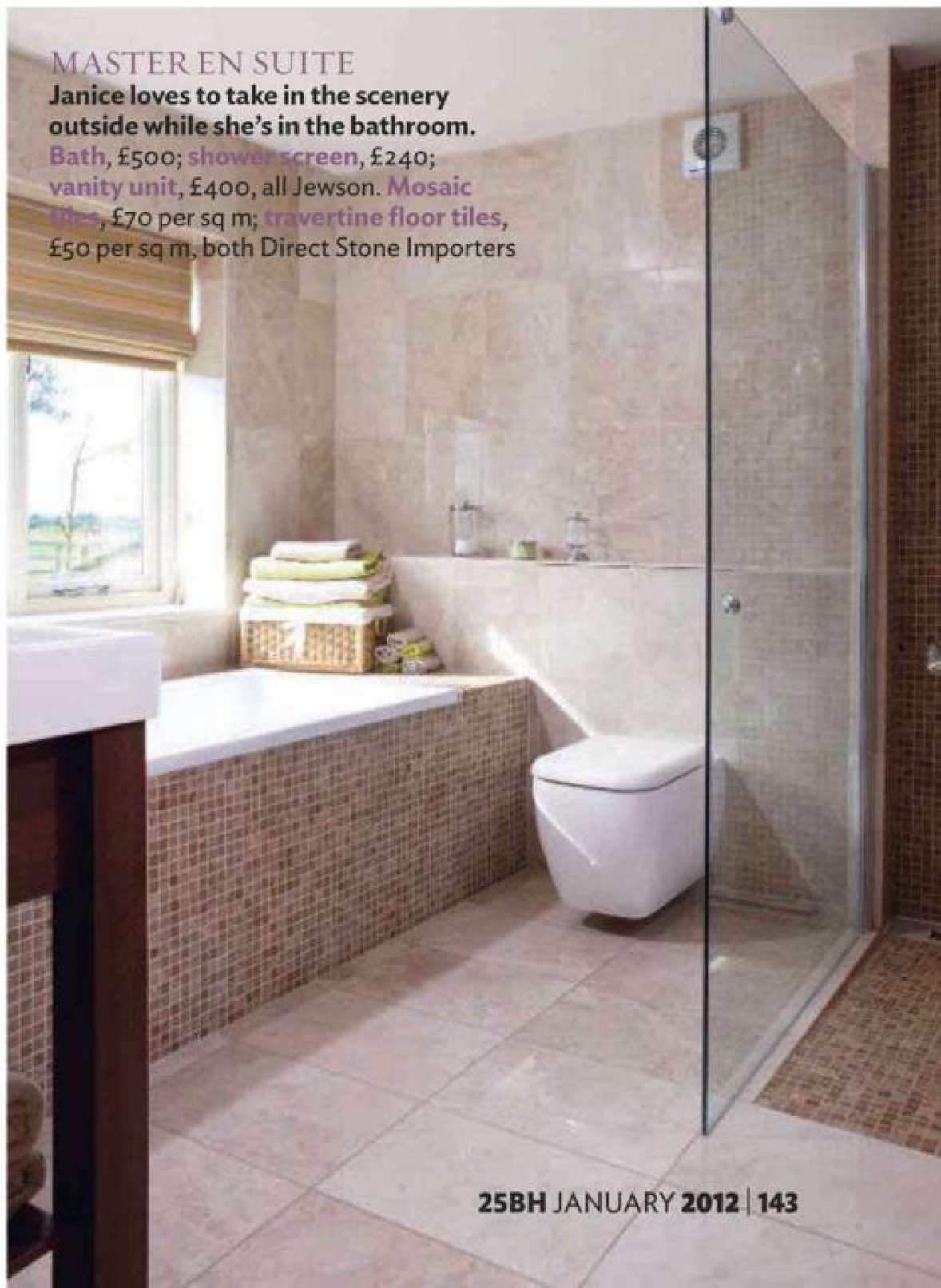

MASTER EN SUITE
Janice loves to take in the scenery outside while she's in the bathroom. Bath, £500; shower screen, £240; vanity unit, £400, all Jewson. Mosaic tiles, £70 per sq m; travertine floor tiles, £50 per sq m, both Direct Stone Importers

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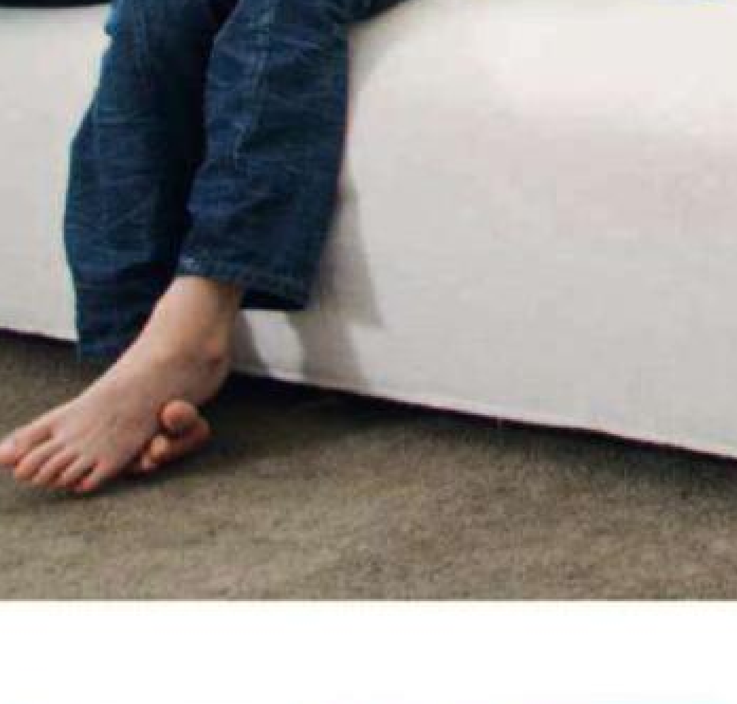
SITTING ROOM

'The big sliding door, which sections this area off from the rest of the house, has been cleverly designed to look like just another white wall panel,' says Jon. For a similar modular **sofa**, take a look at the Oben, £1,490, Dwell. **Magis** large white **Puppy chair**, £108, Panik. **Crassevig Worktop table**, £1,790, Dallas + Dallas. **Arper Catifa 46 dining chairs**, £135 each, Spatial Furniture



STYLE ON SHOW

MODERN ART GALLERIES INSPIRED JOHANE AND JON EVANS TO GIVE THEIR DECOR A MINIMALIST LOOK

FEATURE KATIE GIBBS/GORGEOUS HOMES **PHOTOGRAPHY** SUSAN BURNELL

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HOME TRUTHS

THE OWNERS Johane Evans, who is a hairdresser, her husband Jon, MD of a graphic design company, and their children Amy, Liam and Leo
THEIR HOME Part of a traditional stone farm steading, dating back to the 1880s
LOCATION Edinburgh
ROOMS Hall, sitting/dining room, kitchen/breakfast room, office, four bedrooms, two bathrooms
PURCHASED 2004
PREVIOUS PROPERTY 'Before moving here, we had a two-bedroom house in the same development,' says Johane.

KITCHEN/ BREAKFAST ROOM

The Evans family opted for a double row of wall units, one above the other, to maximise the space afforded by extra-high ceilings. In-line **cabinetry**, from £10,000, In-toto, has this hi-gloss finish. **Luceplan Agave suspension light D49/70s**, £408, Panik. **Capsule bread bin** in lime, £25, Next

Johane and Jon Evans were happily ensconced in their home on the outskirts of Edinburgh when an opportunity arose which the couple couldn't refuse. Their house was one of 23 properties carved out of a 19th-century steading – a series of interconnected barns, stables and outbuildings that once made up a single farm.

But with their children, Amy, Liam and Leo, growing up fast, Johane and Jon knew they would have to move sooner or later. So, when a larger conversion came up for sale just a few doors away, the couple leapt at the chance to almost double the family's living space at a stroke.

'We found the place instantly appealing,' recalls Johane, 'but even so, it was far from perfect. The house had few windows and its layout meant the kitchen was in the middle of the building and was particularly dark.

'In addition, the property, as opposed to our last home, was all on one floor,' she adds, 'and we had to consider whether noise might become an issue.'

CHANGING ROOMS

Nevertheless, Johane and Jon knew they could reconfigure the house to suit their needs, so they put in an offer, which proved successful. Once the place was theirs, the couple drew up plans to remodel its interior.

'We decided to move the kitchen, obscuring it behind a partial wall, and installing a huge sliding door that separates the living and eating areas from the bedrooms and bathrooms,' says Johane. 'It meant we could shut it at night when the children are in bed, so they couldn't hear us, then during the day, we could have it open, keeping an easy flow between the sitting room, the kitchen and the rest of the house.'

As the builders moved in and the restructuring began, the family went to stay with Johane's mother. But then disaster struck, when the contractors assigned ▶

INSIGHT
ALL-WHITE INTERIORS

An all-white backdrop creates the perfect blank canvas for modern, minimalist decor. It works particularly well in large, open-plan spaces.

The look is all about clean lines, so keep your home clutter-free and follow the mantra 'less is more'. Plenty of built-in storage is a must.

Add definition to a pristine scheme with pops of colour, using bright accessories, and opt for striking modern furniture. Hi-gloss finishes and 'floating' wall-hung features all enhance this trend.

Complement a minimalist interior with large statement pieces, such as sculptural vases and designer lighting.

Where possible, try to keep the floors pale in tone, as this will add to the spacious feel. Remember, reflective surfaces will bounce sunshine around the room, while simple window treatments help maximise the available light.

HALLWAY
It may have taken Jon months to lay, but this bamboo flooring works beautifully with the house's all-white decor. **Bamboo flooring in Caramel**, from £75 per sq m, Solid Floor

BATHROOM
Blue LED lights create subtle points of colour. Buttermilk Smart mosaic wall tiles, £43 per sq m, The Original Tile Company. **Duravit 2nd Floor bath** with **Flood Spout**, £1,050; **Aquavision TV**, £1,050, all Victor Paris Bathrooms

to undertake the works suddenly went bankrupt. 'That was a major low point,' says Johane. 'We lost a lot of money and had to redo much of the work ourselves, as the standard of the builders was not up to scratch.'

GOING SOLO

Fortunately, Jon had built up some good contacts with local tradespeople, but taking on the rest of the project single-handedly turned out to be harder than expected. 'I laid the wooden floor myself,' he explains. 'It's made of bamboo, and looked great in the brochure, but the floor was delivered in hundreds of tiny pieces, which were raw and needed to be sanded. The result is fabulous, but I'm not exaggerating when I say it took me two years to finish the job.'

Despite the delays, the couple refused to be downhearted and persevered with the build – and their patience has certainly been rewarded. 'The sliding door we installed was a huge expense, but it works really well,' says Johane. 'Jon now works from home, and sealing off his office means he can enjoy some peace and quiet, while still being part of family life.'

Her husband agrees: 'It's made a real difference,' says Jon. 'When the doors are open, the sun can shine through one side of the house and light up the other.'

ADDED BRIGHTNESS

The sunlight is further enhanced by the monochrome schemes used throughout the house. At first, the Evans painted the walls white as a stopgap while they decided which colours might suit the barn. 'We wanted to live with plain walls for a while to see how the rooms would work,' says Johane. 'But we grew to love the bright, clean-lined look they created, and now we wouldn't change them.'

Johane and Jon may have moved just yards down the road, but their journey has been a long one. 'Finally, we're able to reap the rewards,' Johane enthuses.

FAVOURITE ITEM 'The TV in the bathroom as we can unwind in style, plus it's now really easy to bribe the boys into getting in the tub'

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MASTER BEDROOM

'All the bedrooms have rather low windows and we needed something to distract the eye,' says Johane. 'This pendant light was just the thing.' **Moooi Random ceiling light** in white, £400, Occa-Home

LIAM AND LEO'S BEDROOM

'We wanted a bunk bed that was good quality, and looked a little bit different,' says Jon. Viva Baby has a range of innovative **bunk beds**; its Pirate corner design is priced at £1,095. The Stars and Stripes **duvet cover**, £9, Asda Direct, is similar

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EXTERIOR

The property was built in the style of a traditional long house, using stone reclaimed from the original building, which was a row of lead miners' cottages.

HOME TRUTHS

- **THE OWNERS** Val Blakey, an interior designer, her husband John, a sheep farmer, plus their Collies, Meg and Pip, and Tilly the cat
- **THEIR HOME** Stone farmhouse built on the site of a row of 18th-century lead miners' cottages
- **LOCATION** North Yorkshire
- **ROOMS** Sitting room, kitchen-diner, snug, study, cloakroom, four bedrooms (all en suite), shower room, conservatory
- **BUILT** 1992
- **PREVIOUS PROPERTY** 'We moved here from a detached modern house nearby,' says Val.

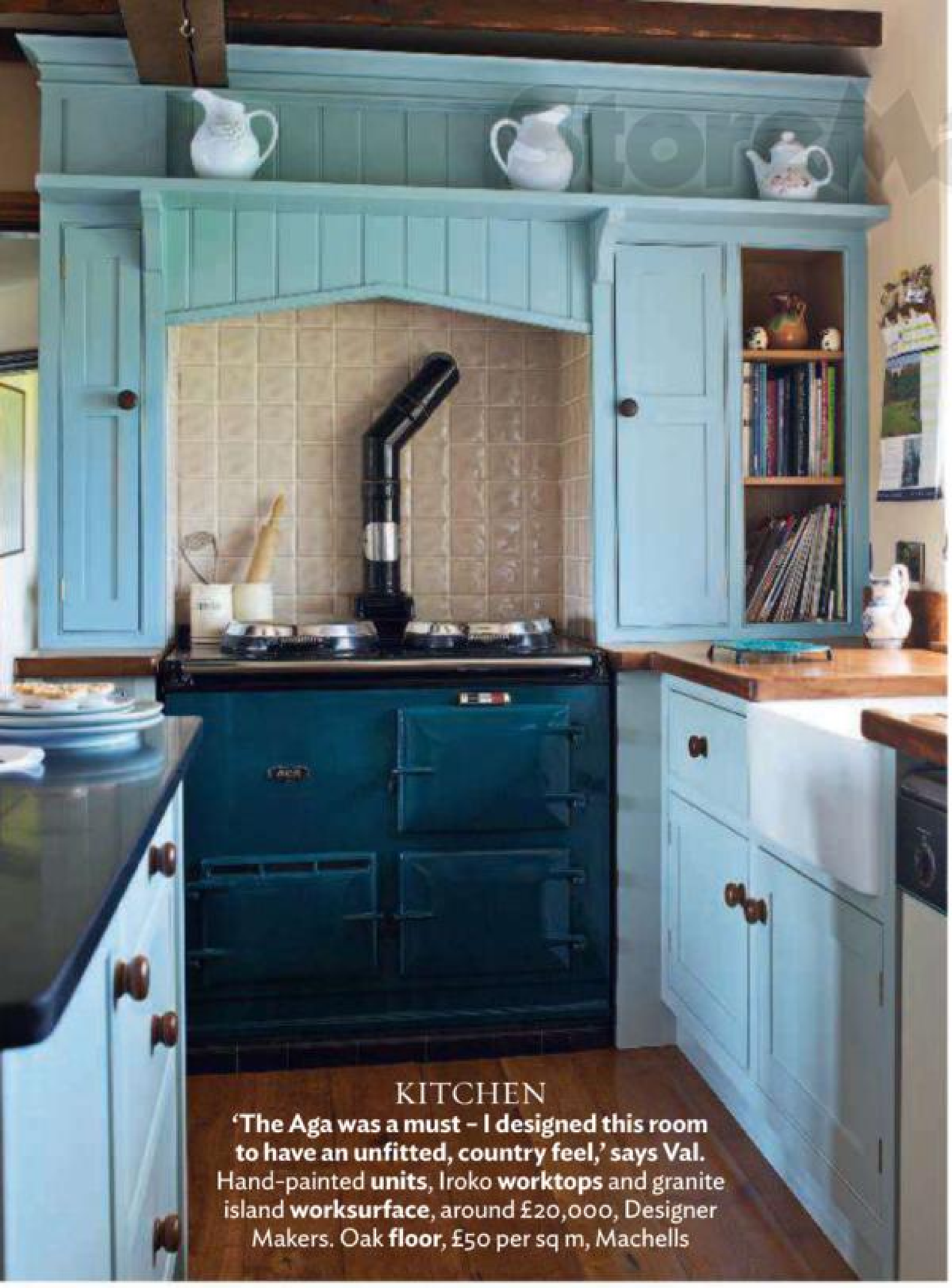
CALL OF THE WILD

Val and John Blakey drew on childhood memories and their passion for textiles to create a cosy, rustic home

FEATURE HEATHER DIXON ✤ **PHOTOGRAPHY** JEREMY PHILLIPS

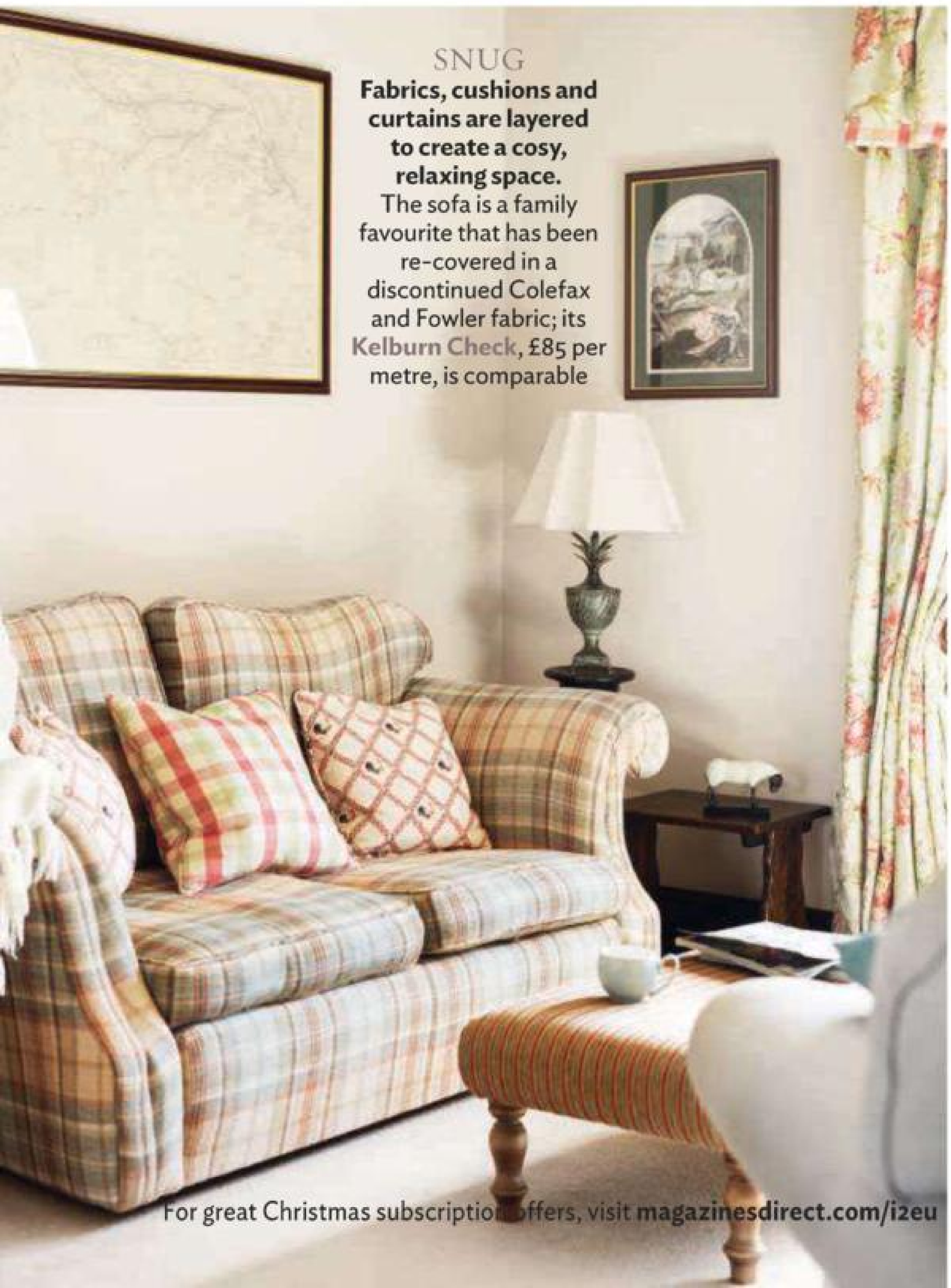
CONSERVATORY

Large windows make the most of the views. 'The glass is made especially strong to withstand ferocious winter winds,' says Val. The Florence, £296, Furniture by CSN, is a similar square coffee table

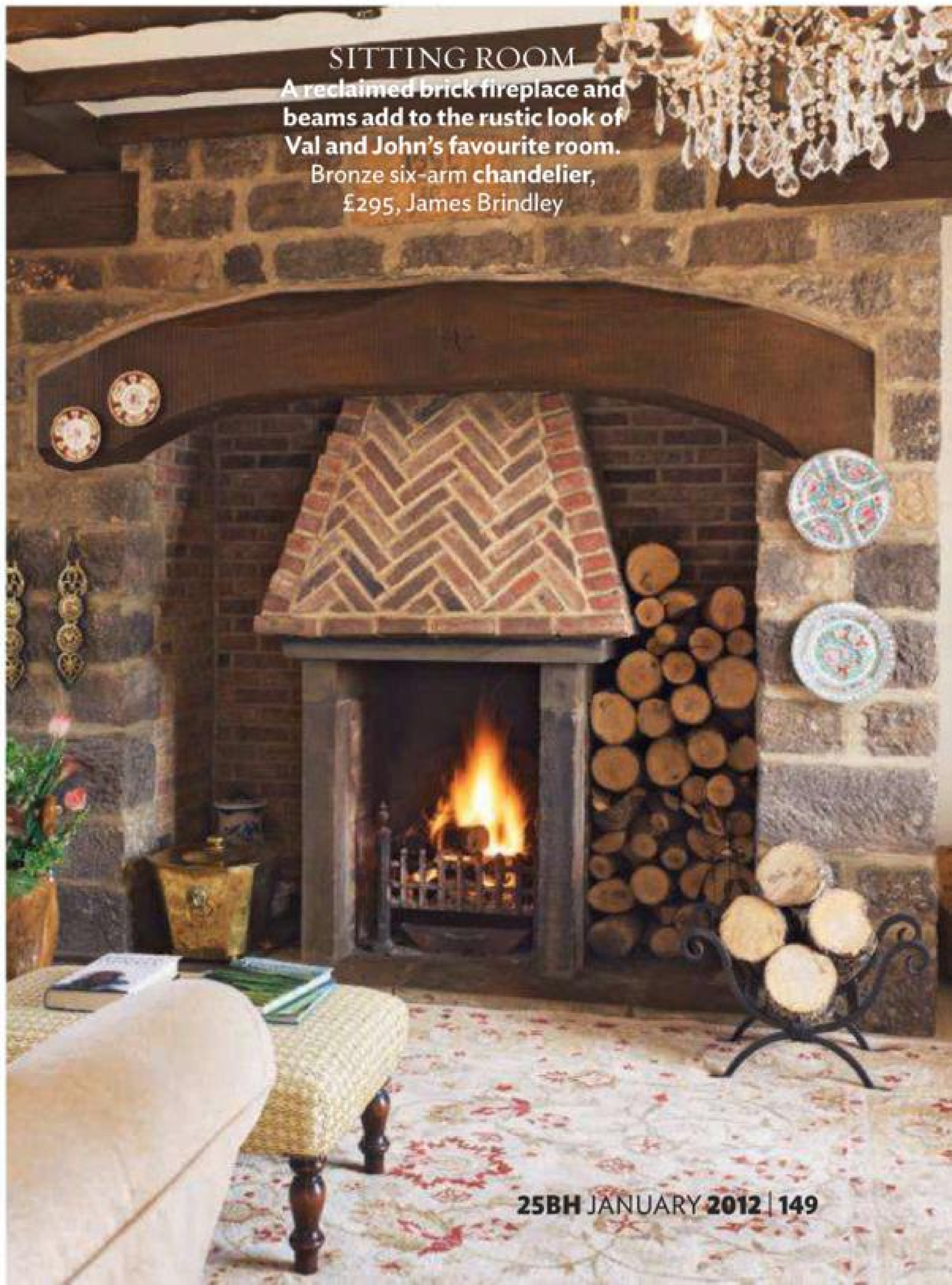


KITCHEN
'The Aga was a must – I designed this room to have an unfitted, country feel,' says Val. Hand-painted **units**, Iroko **worktops** and granite island **worksurface**, around £20,000, Designer Makers. Oak **floor**, £50 per sq m, Machells

DINING AREA
The kitchen-diner used to be two rooms but Val wanted to create one large, sociable space. Oak extending dining table, £2,000, Jonathan Charles. Foxglove wallpaper, £47 per roll, Osborne & Little



SNUG
Fabrics, cushions and curtains are layered to create a cosy, relaxing space. The sofa is a family favourite that has been re-covered in a discontinued Colefax and Fowler fabric; its Kelburn Check, £85 per metre, is comparable



SITTING ROOM
A reclaimed brick fireplace and beams add to the rustic look of Val and John's favourite room. Bronze six-arm **chandelier**, £295, James Brindley

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GUEST BEDROOM
White and cream tones are layered to great effect.
Walls in **House White** estate emulsion, £29.50 for 2.5 litres, Farrow & Ball

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MASTER BEDROOM
Val loves the colour and texture of this elegant walnut bed.
The Flagstone fruitwood **sleigh bed**, £1,079, Lee Longlands, is similar

One of Val Blakey's favourite childhood memories is of her family warming themselves around the kitchen Aga on a freezing winter's night. So when she and her husband John built a hillside farmhouse on their land in the Yorkshire Dales, she wanted to recreate that cosiness but with a modern twist. 'It's easy to over-romanticise the past,' says Val, 'but we wanted to take the best aspects of our childhood homes and combine them with up-to-date ideas.'

With that in mind, the reclaimed stone house was built to include double-cavity walls and plenty of insulation to keep out the winter winds. It also features wood and carpeted floors instead of 'freezing-cold' flagstones and benefits from central heating and luxurious en-suite bathrooms.

When Val turned her attention to the decor, her aim was to create a look that would keep them feeling toasty through the harshest of weathers. 'We're exposed to the elements up here, so the house needs to be practical as well as comfortable,' she says. To create a barrier between the house and the outdoors, the couple built a large conservatory with windows offering spectacular 180-degree views of the Dales and made to withstand the fiercest winds.

'We both come from farming families who have lived in this area for generations,' explains Val. 'The house reflects our way of life, but it's not old fashioned. The furniture is a mix of antiques and new pieces, and I chose textiles and fabrics that will hopefully stand the test of time – although I did splash out on some modern wallpapers, too.'

Val's rural upbringing has influenced her love of natural tones, textures and materials, and despite being surrounded by the latest trends at work as an interior designer, she manages to stick to her own personal style. 'It's easy to be influenced by the latest colour scheme or the current fashion, but you have to consider your house and the way you live in it,' she says.

One thing is certain, the couple love their home and enjoy nothing more than a winter night spent by the fire. 'Our children, John and Anne, grew up in the area and we have four grandchildren who love coming to stay, so we hope they'll have wonderful memories of this house,' says Val.

MASTER EN SUITE
The modern bathroom is as practical as it is luxurious.
Fired Earth's Urban Slate 60 x 40cm **wall tiles**, £34.94 per sq m, and Urban Slate 30 x 30cm **floor tiles**, £24.95 per sq m, are comparable. The Edwardian **basin**, £195, The Harrison Bailey Company, is similar

GUEST BEDROOM
Soft greens are teamed with cream in this feminine scheme.
The Rossetti **bed**, £455, Feather & Black, is comparable. Walls painted in **Farrow's Cream** estate emulsion, £29.50 for 2.5 litres, Farrow & Ball

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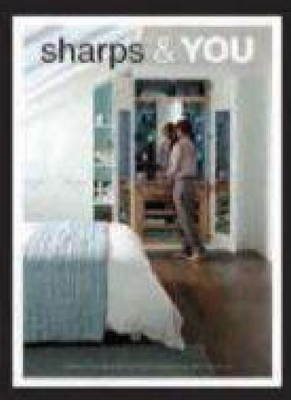

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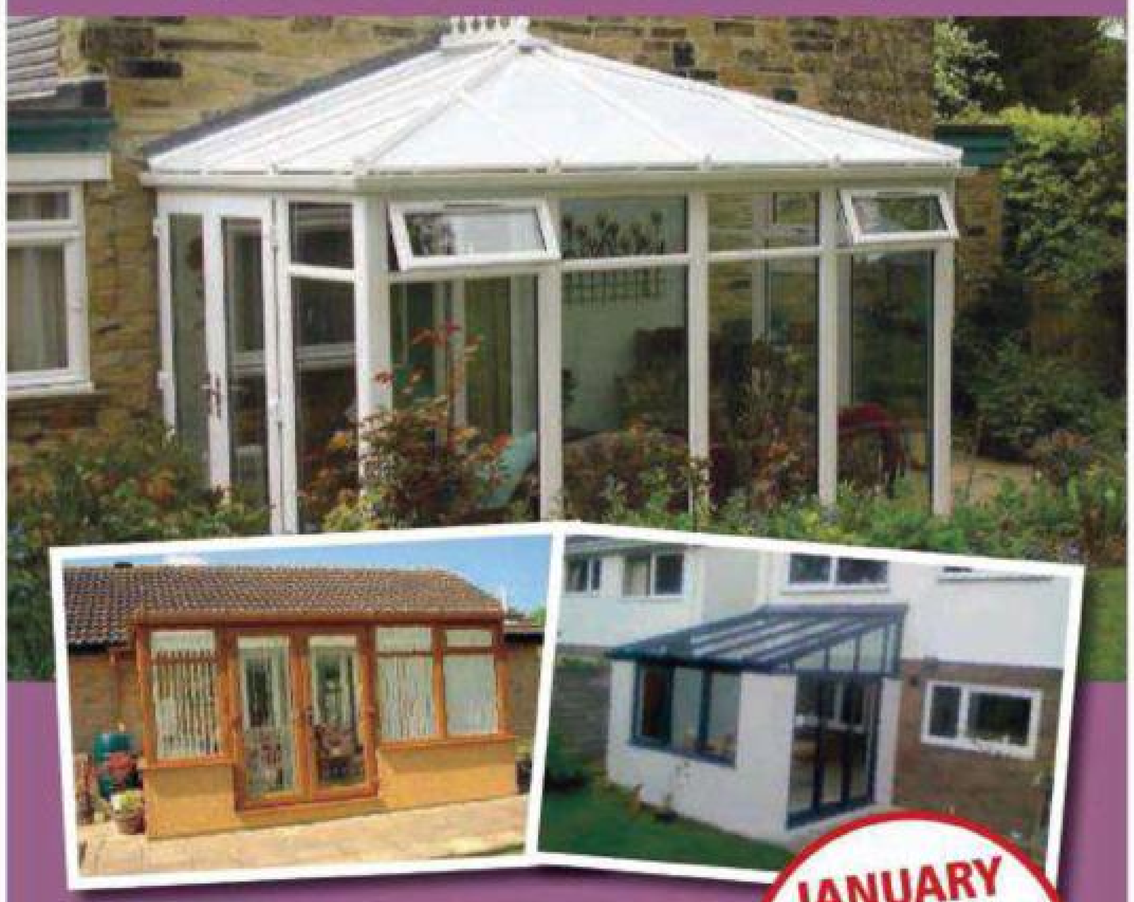

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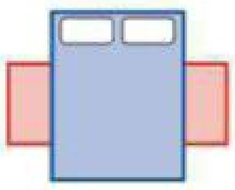

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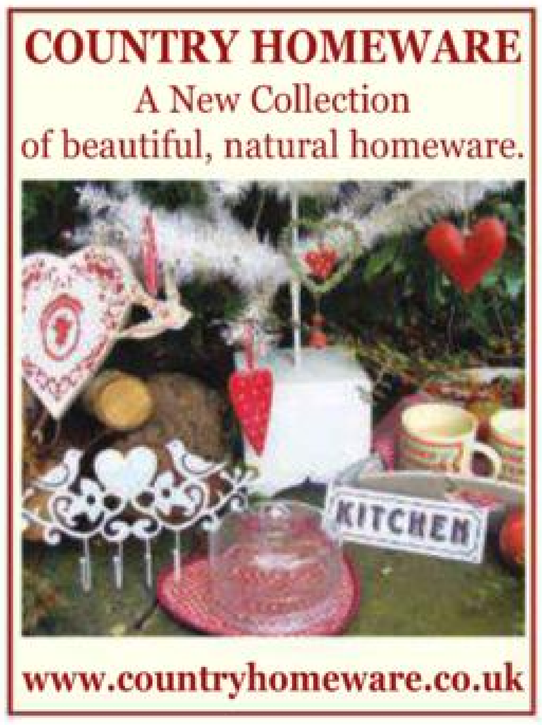

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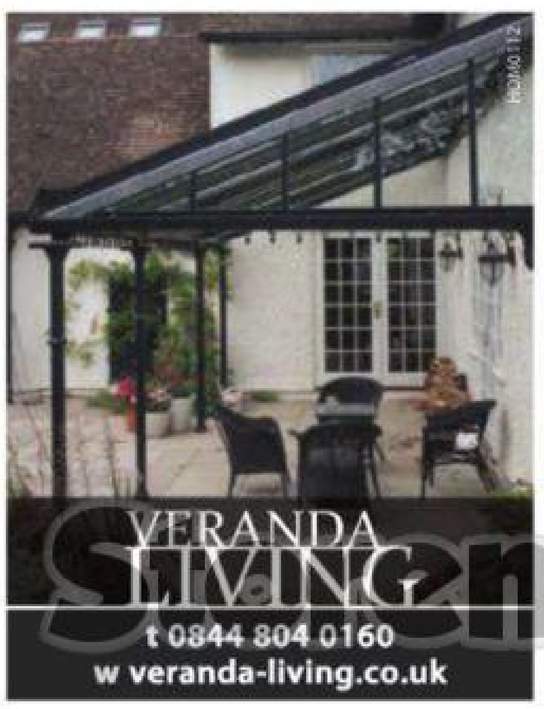

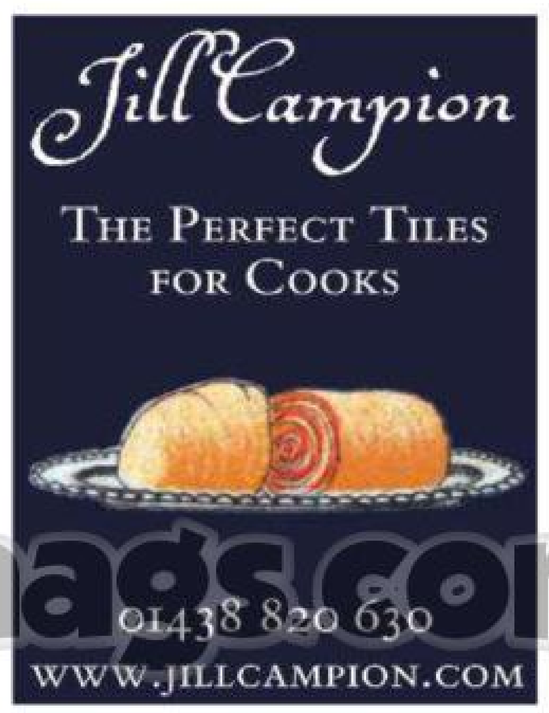

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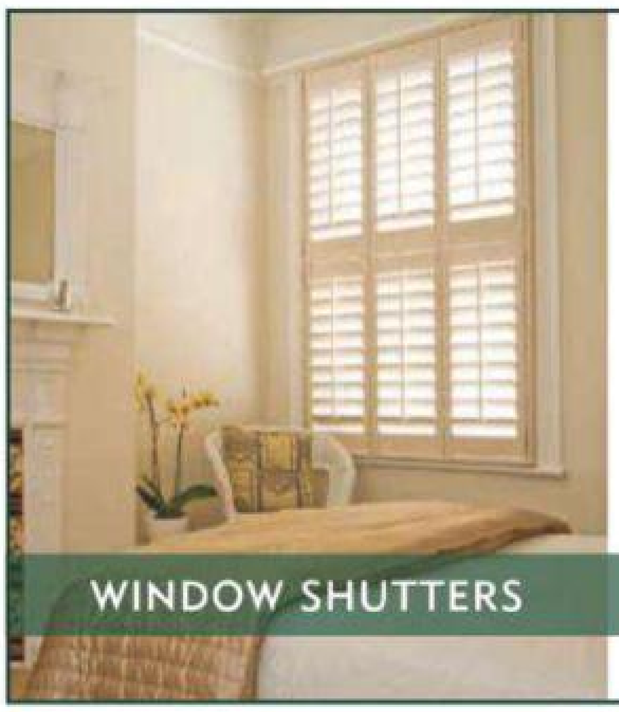

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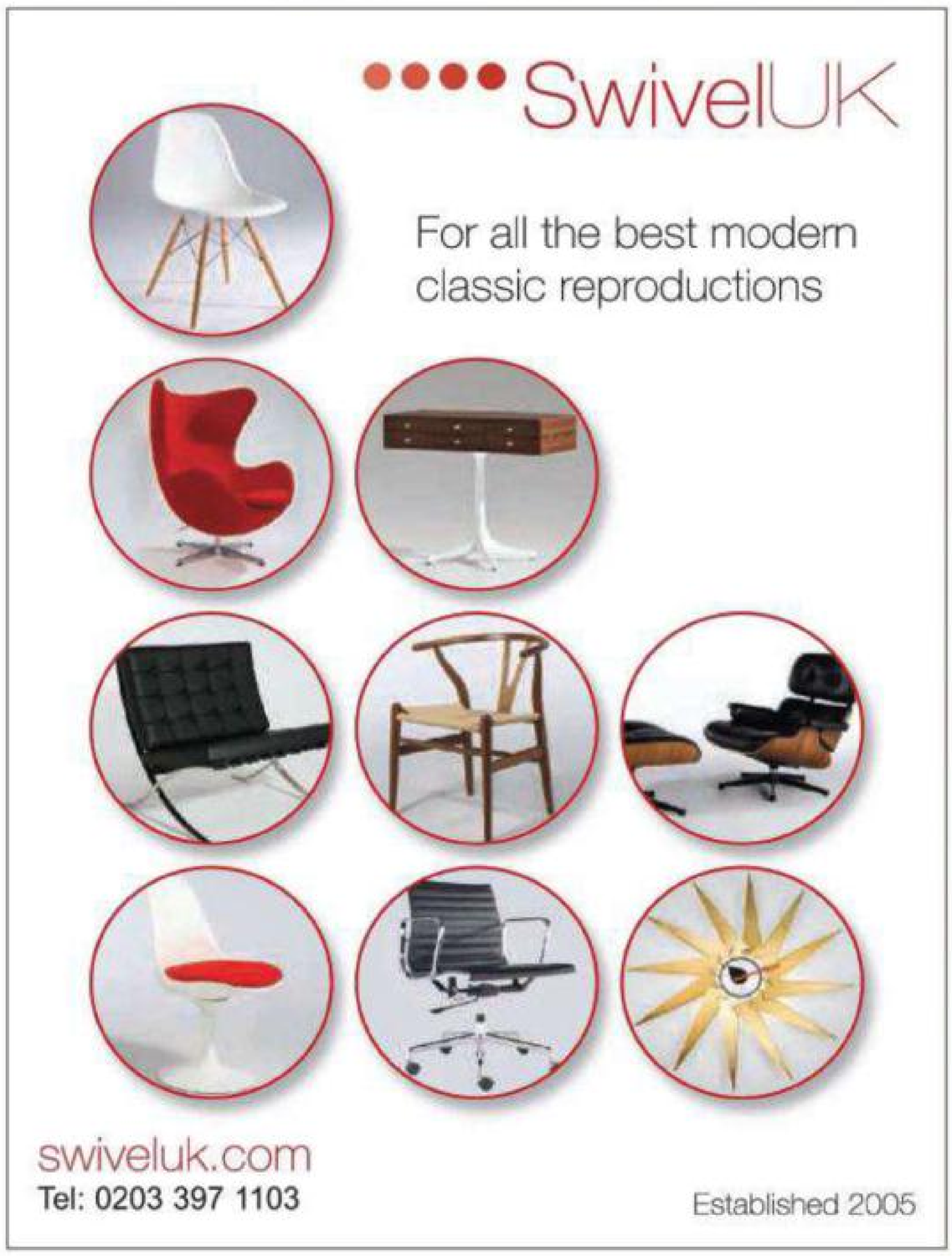

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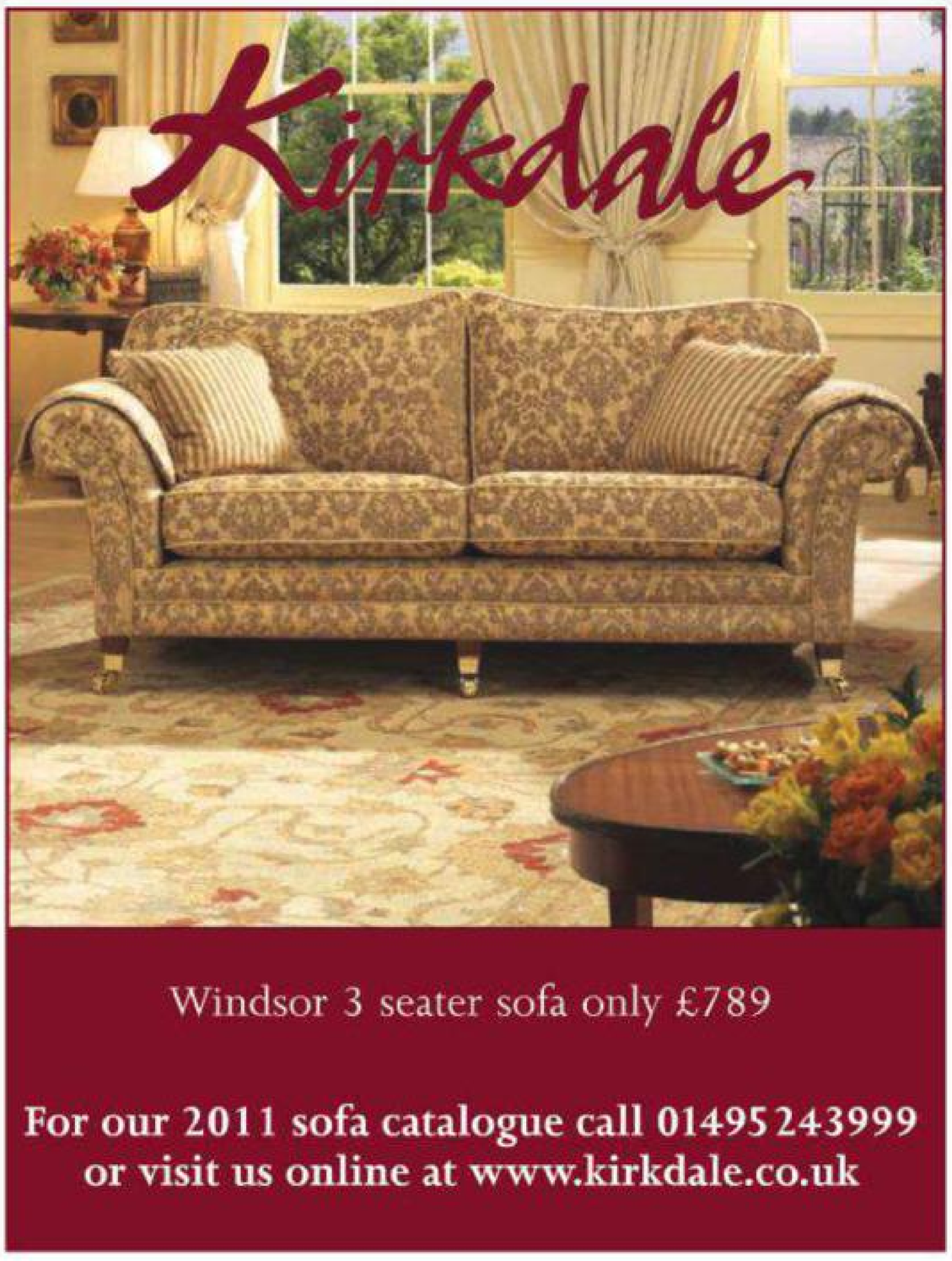

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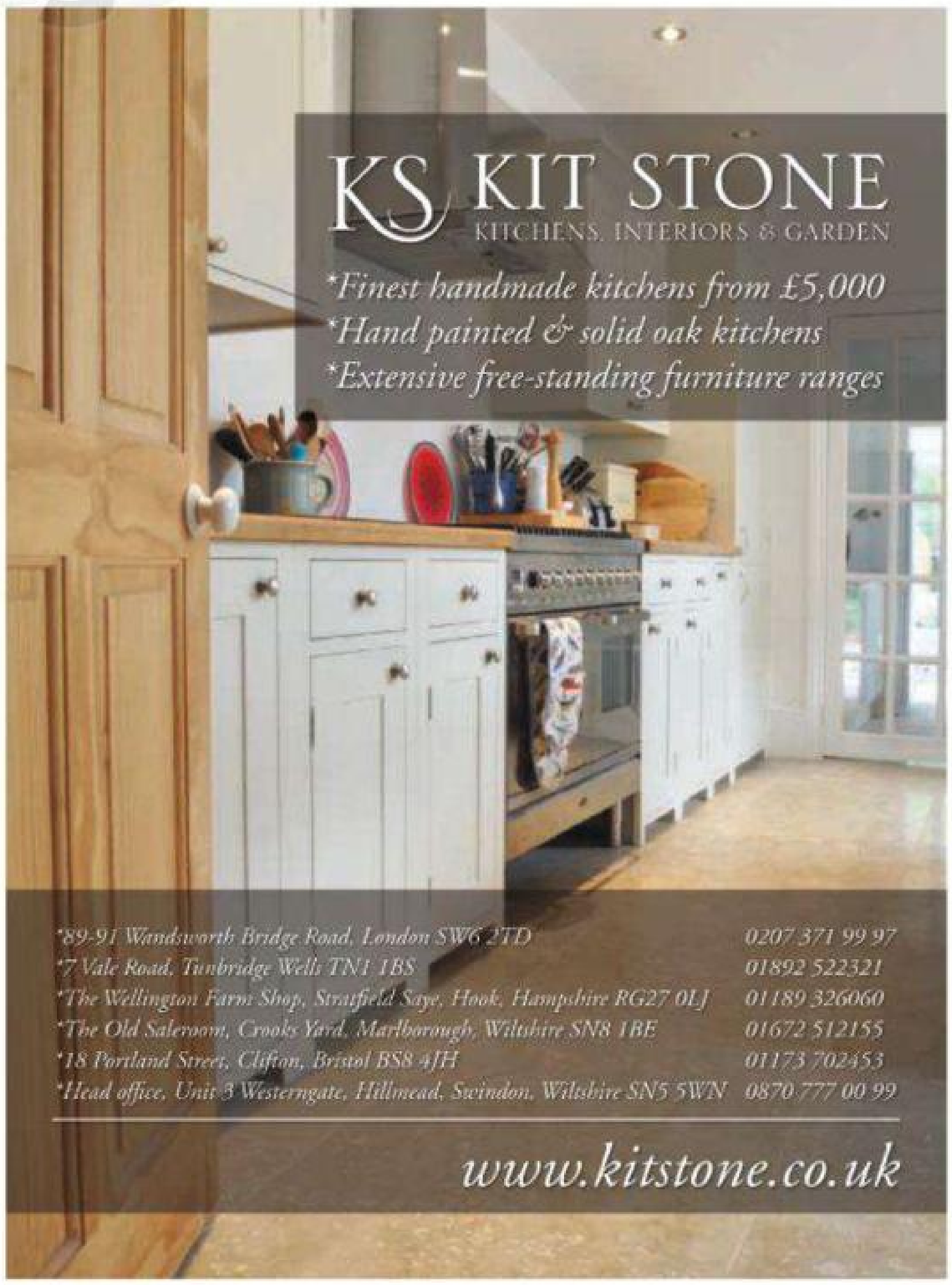

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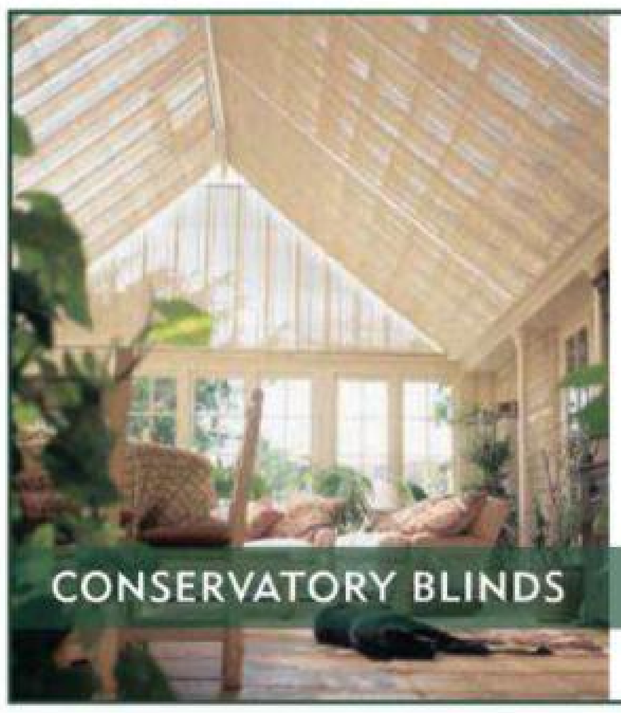

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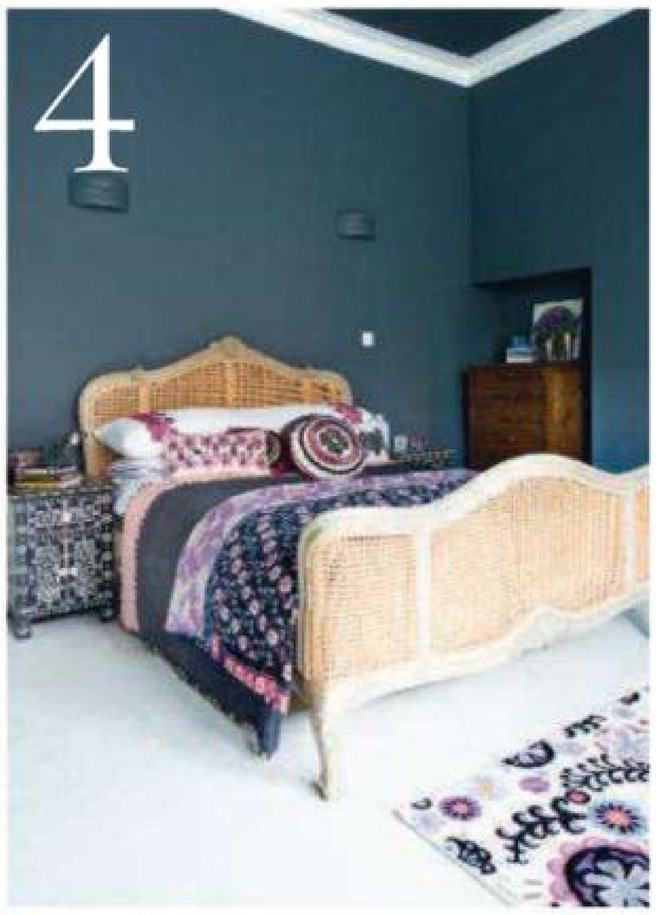

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