• NEW •

COSY COUNTRY

YOUR GUIDE TO WARM & HOMELY LIVING

FROM THE ARCHIVES OF COUNTRY HOMES & INTERIORS

SNUG AS A BUG

Expert advice to bring charm to your home

LIVING YOUR COSIEST LIFE

HOMES, COTTAGES AND BARNS WORTH HIBERNATING IN THIS SEASON

Digital Edition
FUTURE
FIRST EDITION

COSY COUNTRY

COME IN, SETTLE DOWN and make yourself at home. In this brand-new title from the makers of Country Homes & Interiors magazine, we celebrate the art of creating spaces that feel warm, welcoming and entirely your own – from characterful country houses and sympathetic renovations to cosy corners made for quiet moments.

Discover how thoughtful lighting, beautiful scent and layers of texture can transform the everyday, while our home tours reveal inspiring ways to combine style with comfort and family life. And when the evening draws in, there's nowhere better to be than beside a crackling fire, with good food on the table and everyone gathered close.

COUNTRY HOMES & INTERIORS

COSY COUNTRY

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QUIET COMFORT

Retreat from overwhelm with soothing colours, grounding textures and the cosseting softness of blankets, fleeces and cushions

Blush, terracotta and pink-toned neutrals infuse a room with gentle warmth. Choose ribbed accessories and furniture for a grounded feel and add a glow with candles

MELLOW MOOD
Deni grand **sofa** in Natural; **cushion covers**; Otoro **pendant light**; Nakuru coffee **table**; Ngolo **tealight holder**; Pawi mango wood **tray**; **mugs**; Naryla **lantern**; Chakala side **table**; Zadie **planter**; Kayia acacia wood **mirror**; Yasha mango wood **sideboard**; Avisa **lamp**; Dia jute **lampshade**, all Nkuku

RUSTIC DETAILS
Vase; **cake stand**; wine **glasses**; **jug**; **napkins**; side **plate**, all M&S x Fired Earth. Finn gloss four-seater dining **table**, M&S ➛

Filter light with gauzy curtains and opt for warm-toned bulbs – they're proven to create a calming atmosphere and shift your body into relaxation mode

BUTLER'S PANTRY
Hector large pleat ceiling **lights**, Original BTC

TEXTURAL LAYERS
Faro woven **bench**; Rustic linen **tablecloth**; Rustic linen **napkins**; Burford **lamp shade**; Mercury **tealight holder**; Linton **vase**; medium Autumn Botanical **candle**; Hampton **dinnerware**; Cartmel **side table**; Cowley **table lamp**; tall Ashurst **vase**; jute **pouffe**; braided jute **rug**, all The White Company ➛

The softness of sheepskin, the weight and warmth of a wool blanket, the kiss of crumpled linen – use touch and texture to stimulate and soothe in equal measure

HOMELY NOOK
Bexley **side table**; Marton **side table**; Parham **vase**; Amber **candle**; Mercury **candle holder**; small Fairlie **tealight holder**; Stanton forged **candle holder**; Tibetan **sheepskin rug**, all The White Company

DREAM WEAVER
British Wool collection large **throw**; extra-large **throw**; **cushion cover**, all The British Blanket Company

FEATURE ANDRÉA CHILDS

FAMILIAR TERRITORY

An existing working relationship with interior designer Christian Bense proved invaluable for Frances and William Selwood's redesign of their new country home

EXTERIOR The elegant detached farmhouse boasts a superb rural setting, wildflower meadow, landscaped gardens and a vegetable plot, as well as stunning views out over the Somerset countryside

STUDY AREA A section of the room has been zoned into a work space, marked by a contemporary trestle table and an elegant chair. **Curtains** in Buttermilk sheer linen, Rose Uniacke. Ceiling **light**, Mullan Lighting

move from London to rural Somerset found the Selwood family in completely new surroundings, yet the transition was reassuringly seamless. 'Though we didn't have a childhood connection to Somerset, it somehow felt instantly familiar,' says Frances Selwood as she explains the driving force behind the move. 'We left London looking for space, both literal and psychological. We have four children and wanted to raise them in the countryside, surrounded by nature and wildlife.'

After a lengthy search, the 'perfect' house finally presented itself. The only drawback was that it wouldn't be going on the market for several months. 'We knew from the photograph alone that this was the place. The house was a mix of old barns and a newer conversion, with stables already in place just when we were dreaming of having horses. But it was the feeling of the land that settled us. It felt familiar and immediately like home,' says Frances. So, the family waited.

Thankfully, the survey showed the house to be structurally sound. 'That allowed us to focus on gently modernising the house to suit how we live, putting our own stamp on it rather than undertaking a large-scale transformation,' Frances continues. To do so, the couple called on the expert help of interior designer Christian Bense, someone they had worked with on previous house projects. 'We love the way that Christian is both able to challenge us as well as design spaces that feel sympathetic to their surroundings. Moving from London, we knew this property would feel different to any of the homes we had designed before, but we didn't want to lose ourselves in that. Christian was able to design a home which felt both like us and different at the same time.'

On viewing the house, Christian and his team wanted to create an interior that responded to its rural location. 'From the outset this cottage deserved to look as beautiful inside as it did from the outside,' he says. 'As a studio, we always take a property's location into account. We typically avoid using bold paint colours in our work, so this project pushed us out of our comfort zone and we found ourselves using a handful of shades per room to create an organic, lived-in feel, as if the cottage had evolved naturally over time.' This is evident throughout with earthy tones of red and green providing the perfect backdrop for existing pieces to sit in their new rural surrounds, with some furniture reupholstered to suit. The children's dormitory-style bedroom, where all four youngsters hunker down together, boasts a charming leafy wallpaper print to anchor familiar possessions into their new environs. 'We were moving to the property with lots of our existing furniture, but didn't want it to look like we had transplanted our London home into a countryside cottage,' says Frances, 'so our brief was to ensure the home felt layered and included a mix of old and new.'

Christian and the team rose to the challenge. 'Frances and William wanted an interior that celebrated the property's rural setting but in a fresh and modern way that was more akin to a cool guesthouse,' he adds. Attention to detail was key, with period features such as cast-iron column radiators, dado rails and panelling, quality fixtures and finishes, alongside a generous mix of antiques and personal pieces to create the sort of stylish, intimate spaces that one might discover in a luxury country house hotel.

'We were also blessed to have such an idyllic setting for inspiration. The pond, gardens and meadows certainly influenced the interiors,' explains Christian. 'I think there is something so charming about the property and its surroundings. Each time we visit the farm, the client seems to have a new horse and the vegetable garden seems to get bigger and bigger!'

christianbense.com

AT HOME WITH

OWNER William Selwood, a financier and Frances Selwood, a writer, live here with their four children.

HOUSE The property is a farmhouse with barns and outbuildings. The house comprises a sitting room/study, kitchen, cloakroom, main en-suite bedroom, two further bedrooms and a bathroom.

SITTING ROOM An old dresser, repainted and finished with gingham panels, conceals the TV. **Dresser** in Railings by Farrow & Ball. Vintage leather **floor lamp** by Jacques Adnet, similar, Vinterior

SITTING ROOM A chimney alcove of custom-built bookshelves provides valuable storage as well as adding to the room's personality and charm. **Walls** in Etruscan Brown, Edward Bulmer Natural Paint

SITTING ROOM A rich palette of earthy reds and browns creates a warm and welcoming atmosphere in which to sit and relax. **Armchair**, clients own, reupholstered in linen fabric from Designs of the Times

‘We left London looking for space, both literal and psychological. We have four children and wanted to raise them in the countryside, surrounded by nature and wildlife’

KITCHEN A dresser provides valuable storage and display space for crockery and kitchen essentials. **Walls** in Sand V by Paint & Paper Library. **Dresser** in Trumpington by Edward Bulmer Natural Paint

KITCHEN Classic Shaker-style units and traditional ironmongery are the perfect country kitchen combination. **Units** in Light Bronze Green by Little Greene. Similar wall **plates**, Abask. Dodo Egg pendant **light**, Beata Heuman

MAIN BEDROOM A gentle green shade on the walls and rich chocolate hue on the ceiling combine for a cocooning feel. **Walls** in Lichen, Farrow & Ball. **Ceiling** in Plum Brandy by Paint & Paper Library

ENSUITE A large free-standing bath takes centre stage with a traditional-style curtain pole and shower. **Bath**, Lusso, painted in Messel, Little Greene. **Shower curtain**, The Linen Shed. Marble **floor tiles**, Mandarin Stone

Burlington
London
Aésop.

MAIN BEDROOM A peg rail painted to match the walls adds a quirky, country-house style touch, while a bamboo chest of drawers provides a textural touch. For a similar **chest of drawers**, try Vinterior

GUEST BEDROOM This room continues the palette of green and has a fresher feel with an off-white headboard and simple striped curtains. **Walls** in Sobek, Paint & Paper Library. **Curtains** in Hugo Stripe, Chelsea Textiles

EXTERIOR Frances and William left their life in the city for more space and to be surrounded by nature and were drawn to this home for its idyllic setting, which included barns and outbuildings and a pond

CHILDREN'S BEDROOM
The eaves space has been transformed into a charming dormitory-style bedroom for the four children to enjoy. Leaf **wallpaper** by Isabella Worsley. Similar **beds**, Happy Beds

FEATURE SARA EMSLIE
PHOTOGRAPHS PAUL WHITBREAD

WILLIAM'S COUNTRY LIFE

MY COUNTRY LIFE 'I love riding and teaching my children to ride, walking straight out into the countryside and the slower rhythm that comes with space.'

EAT AT 'We are spoilt for choice around us; there are lots of fab country pubs. We like The Bell & Crown in Zeals (bellandcrown.com) and The Three Horseshoes in Batcombe (thethreehorseshoesbatcombe.co.uk).'

VISIT 'There are endless footpaths nearby, along with National Trust estates such as Stourhead (nationaltrust.org.uk/visit/wiltshire/stourhead).'

SHOP AT 'We love Tisbury and Castle Cary – both have excellent bookshops such as Bailey Hill Bookshop in Castle Cary (baileyhillbookshop.com) and Fox & King in Tisbury (foxandking.com), along with good independent shops.'

CREATE A COSY, LAYERED HOME

This is how Emma Sims Hilditch, the interior designer known for her homely, welcoming spaces, conjures up an elegant and lived-in look

There are some homes that immediately make us feel at ease. They have the decorating X factor that combines comfort, atmosphere and character, without looking overdone.

'When designing our clients' homes, it's our top priority to ensure the house feels lived in and homely,' says Emma Sims Hilditch, who founded her successful interior design agency in 2009. 'Even if we are starting from scratch with no personal possessions (which happens occasionally), we look to ensure the house feels like it has evolved over time.'

START WITH ONE KEY FABRIC

'When beginning a project, I consider colour, print and texture in equal measure,' explains Emma. 'Creating a cosy interior is achieved firstly by choosing key pieces of furniture, then layering your scheme with upholstery, lighting, art and antiques. The finishing touches come with accessories and objects.'

All that can seem a lot to factor into your decorating scheme, so Emma suggests picking out one key fabric and building a moodboard around it. 'Depending on our client and the brief we have taken, I will look to find one fabric initially, perhaps used for the curtains, to become inspiration for the entire scheme.'

LEARN TO LAYER TEXTILES AND PATTERN

'We then begin the layering process,' explains Emma, 'adding smaller-scale fabrics for cushions and lampshades, weaves for upholstery, and perhaps a grass cloth or linen for the wallpaper to add texture.'

While you want your decorating scheme to hang together, beware of being too matchy-matchy. 'Don't be too prescriptive; the aim is to create an interior with depth, warmth and personality,' Emma says. 'Go with your instinct and initially pull out as many fabrics as you like. These can then be shortlisted by sitting the swatches next to each other on a table and checking that they sit comfortably together. Don't be afraid to include a number of different patterned fabrics in a scheme. For me, as long as the colours are complementary then a scheme can have a variety of patterns in smaller and large scales.'

CONSIDER THE FLOORS AND CEILINGS

'Think about all the surfaces of a room when considering how to add layers. The flooring could be timber, with a large sisal rug, and layered on top of that a smaller decorative rug. Ceilings should not be forgotten and we have been known to wallpaper a ceiling to give a really great effect.'

SOURCE ARTISAN AND ANTIQUE BUYS

It's one-off finds and unusual pieces that add depth to a room scheme, and they don't need to be expensive. Flea markets, makers' fairs, open studios, auctions and antiques markets are all good places to pick up characterful finds. 'I spend much of my time travelling in search of new inspiration,' says Emma.

PICK UP ON TRENDS

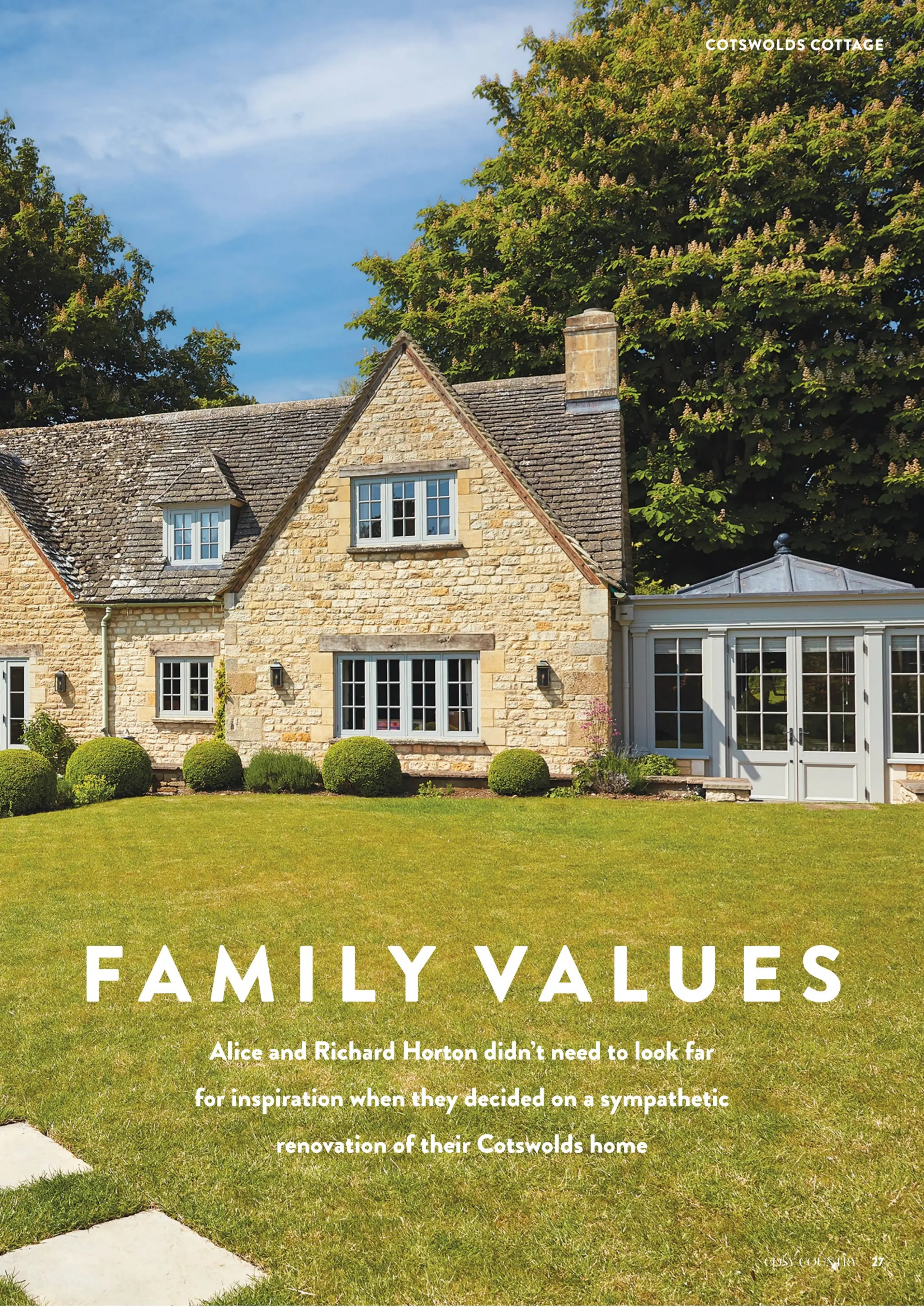
'Part of the fun of being an interior designer is to see trends evolve – and they certainly have over the 25 years that I have been in the industry! Although we are not a trend-led business, of course interior fashions do influence our work,' says Emma. Accessories are a great way to introduce a trend to your room. A bright and shapely lamp, a scallop-edged lampshade or rug, or a colourful lacquer tray will add that final layer to complete your scheme.

FEATURE ANDRÉA CHILDS

'Don't be too prescriptive; the aim is to create an interior with depth, warmthand personality'

TOP TO TOE
Consider every surface when planning your decor – even the ceiling can make a statement

EXTERIOR The house is enclosed by original stone walls lined with apple trees, box and roses. New windows and doors were painted to complement the orangery extension



FAMILY VALUES

Alice and Richard Horton didn't need to look far for inspiration when they decided on a sympathetic renovation of their Cotswolds home

FAMILY ROOM 'This green tone is warm in the winter and cooling in summer,' says designer Laura Horner. **Walls** in Yeabridge Green, Farrow & Ball. Wave **sofa**, David Seyfried. Tina **lights**, Pooky. **Ottoman**, Lorfords

DINING AREA The orangery was commissioned so the family could eat overlooking the garden. **Orangery**, Vale Garden Houses; in Stone II, Paint & Paper Library. Antique **light** sourced and restored by Laura Horner Interiors

Most homeowners might approach a renovation with a little trepidation, but for Alice and Richard Horton, the prospect was tinged with excitement as Richard's sister-in-law Laura Horner runs her own interior design practice. 'It meant she was absolutely in our corner when it came to dealing with architects, quantity surveyors and builders,' says Richard. 'Plus, she and Alice share a similar sensibility, which resulted in many fruitful hours visiting antiques stores and artisans.'

The couple, who have a house in London, began searching for another property to be closer to their parents and spend more time in the countryside. The Cotswold stone house they found in a village close to Burford was built more than a century ago, initially with a modest footprint. Over the years, it had been added to, in the form of a double-height extension, plus a garage outbuilding. 'The extension had resulted in two staircases, which in some respects helps with circulation, but we always felt you could see the join between old and new,' says Richard. 'Plus, the outbuilding was ripe for renewal.'

With Laura, the couple drew up plans for an orangery to be added to the side of the house, plus compact living quarters above the garage. The snug, once a dining-TV-room hybrid, would be turned into a more cosy space for family movie nights. Smaller tweaks included moving the entrance door and hallway for a more ergonomic approach and removing the doors from the former dining room. 'We wanted to move a wall, but found that we couldn't, says Richard. 'So we turned the space over to a boot room. It was an off-the-cuff decision, but as it's in the centre of the house, it works better than we could have imagined.'

The couple were also keen on making one of the bedrooms a playful bunk-bed space. 'I remember sharing a room with my brother and really enjoying it,' Richard says. 'We wanted to create that sense of childhood nostalgia for our own children, too – it's a place for them to make memories.' Laura created an elegant design for the beds, which sleep five, finding a local joiner to make them. 'He was so passionate about detailing,' says Laura, 'right down to the small diamond carvings in the panels.'

Much of the joy of the project came from working with local artisans and sourcing British fabrics. 'There are so many incredible craftspeople right on the doorstep,' Laura reflects. 'We found handpainted tiles at Tiles of Stow, commissioned painted lampshades from Sarah Blomfield to complement the tones of the family room, and sourced antiques from Tetbury.'

Inspired by the colours of the landscape and the mellow tones of Cotswold stone, Laura devised schemes that pay homage to classic English country style, underpinned by a fresh, light touch in reference to the couple's travels in Morocco and southern France. 'Alice's brief was for it to feel like a lived-in country home, so we knew colour and pattern were key,' says Laura. 'It helped that she has a huge appreciation for fabric brands including Soane, Rose Uniacke and Nina Campbell.' The sisters-in-law also had some unexpected finds, including vintage rush matting from France unearthed at Sunbury Antiques Market. 'Numerous people tried to buy it from us as we carried it back to the car,' smiles Laura. 'It was so large that we were able to use it in the kitchen and dining room, trimming it down ourselves, with some spare left for the entrance hall. Pieces like these always make a home more interesting.'

With its textural finish, pretty fabrics and soft terracotta, ochre and olive tones, the house finally feels 'cosy, cohesive and pulled together,' concludes Richard. 'There's room for us all, and we love that someone so dear to us had a hand in the interiors.' The result, perhaps, is a family home in the very truest sense.
laurahornerinteriors.com

AT HOME WITH

OWNERS Alice and Richard Horton live here with children Stella and George.

HOUSE The cottage was built around 1900. It comprises a snug, boot room, hall, cloakroom, kitchen-diner, family room, orangery, four bedrooms, four bathrooms (all en suite) and an annexe.

BOOT ROOM Previously a small study, this space was opened up to the main hall and stairs. **Walls** in Clove, Edward Bulmer. Blind **fabric**, Warris Vianni. Antique **sofa** in original sacking fabric, Lorfords

KITCHEN The existing kitchen cabinetry was painted, complemented by new stone tops and handles. **Walls** and **cabinetry** in Clove, Edward Bulmer. **Lampshades** (on antique pendant), MG&Co

KITCHEN Walls and cabinetry finished in a brown-toned pink lend both warmth and a gentle modernity. **Dresser** in Lute, Edward Bulmer. Residence Cosmopolitan wall **tiles** in Thebes, Tiles of Stow

LIVING ROOM 'We wanted this to be an adult zone, with a cosy, autumnal feel,' says Laura. **Sofa**, David Seyfried; in cotton velvet in Moss, Rose Uniacke. **Armchairs** in Rayure Nantes in Green, Turnell & Gigon

RENAISSANCE
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THE HOUSE OF A LIFETIME
SIGN MASTER CLASS

TWIN BEDROOM 'This room is softly neutral, but plenty of texture retains interest,' says Laura. Palm NS 46002 **wallpaper**, Altfield. **Woodwork** in Ball Green, Farrow & Ball. **Mirror**, Burford Antiques & Interiors

CHILDREN'S BEDROOM Lattice work and integrated steps give bunk beds an elegant look. **Beds**, designed by Laura Horner Interiors; in Ethereal Blue, Edward Bulmer. **Walls** in Bone China Blue Deep, Little Greene

'We were inspired by the Cotswolds location, the countryside and spending time exploring nearby hotels and shops. As a result, quaint and cool, old and new, effortlessly blend'

EXTERIOR The family often dines under the shade of the olive tree. **Garden design and landscaping**, Elizabeth Tyler. Cheltenham garden **table** and **chairs**, Neptune

GUEST BEDROOM Dusky rose and gentle grey tones create a soothing, chalky palette. **Walls** in Jonquil, Edward Bulmer. **Drapes** in Kalahari in Chestnut, Peter Fasano at Tissus d'Hélène. Limber **lights** and rattan **shades**, Pooky

FEATURE EMMA J PAGE
PHOTOGRAPHS ANDREW TWORT

ALICE AND RICHARD'S COUNTRY LIFE

SIMPLE PLEASURES 'Walking along the d'Arcy Dalton Way to The Fox at Barrington (thefoxatbarrington.com), which is especially fun when Giffords Circus is in location in the field opposite.'

SHOP AT 'Burford Garden Co (burford.co.uk). It has everything for the home and garden, including tableware, furniture, linens and food.'

VISIT 'Daylesford farm shop (daylesford.com) because everything there is lovely. It's a one-stop shop for great gift ideas, hampers, food and wine.'

EAT AT 'The Bull in nearby Burford (bullburford.com), especially Wild, the restaurant in its outdoor kitchen. It also has lovely rooms for overnight stays.'

CREATE A SNUG

Comfort, charm and colour are the defining characteristics of a snug. Follow our guide, sit back and relax...

1

SOFT TOUCH

Textures play a defining role in establishing the atmosphere of a room, with softer fabrics, such as wool and velvet, the go-to choice in a snug. These weighty materials are good insulators, bringing warmth, comfort and tactility, and can come in the form of window treatments, throws, upholstery, cushions and rugs. Contrast these luxurious finishes with natural materials, such as wood, jute and linen. This will introduce another visual dimension to the room and emphasise the sumptuousness of softer fabrics. Add to the sensual experience with a scented candle or diffuser – opt for one with notes of lavender, neroli or camomile for a calming ambience. ➛

Striped **rug**; Amelia **floor lamp**; **cushions**, all M&S

2

WARM AND COSY

A snug should be a sanctuary, where you can escape the busyness of life. Drenching walls, woodwork and even ceilings in a deep colour instantly fosters this sense of intimacy and relaxation, even if the room is naturally bright and airy. 'Navy and indigo are popular for their depth and versatility, but pink and green are also perennial favourites – earthy pinks and moodier greens capture this nurturing warmth,' says Anna Hill, brand director at Fenwick & Tilbrook. Colour drenching also provides a rest for the eyes as they aren't drawn to multiple colours, finishes and patterns – resulting in a space where you can wind down and switch off.

For a similar **colour** try Forest Glade interior eggshell, Fenwick & Tilbrook

Space **designed** by Uns Hobbs. Try Can-Can **eggshell** No.17, Earthborn

3

BOOKISH CHARM

Channel the serenity of a library by including a cosy reading nook in your design. 'I love designing bookshelves for my clients and I always recommend mixing in personal touches like ceramics, artworks, candlesticks and trinkets alongside the books. Laying books in different directions, combining them at various heights, and leaving some spaces open adds visual interest. A piece of vintage artwork is always a perfect finishing touch,' advises Uns Hobbs, founder at Uns Hobbs Interiors. Complete the library feel with a plump, high-backed armchair and a floor lamp, to create the perfect spot to cosy up with a good book.

FEATURE HOLLY REANEY **PHOTOGRAPH** (2) FUTURECONTENTHUB.COM/RACHAEL SMITH (3) **STYLING** UNS HOBBS INTERIORS **PHOTOGRAPH** BOZ GAGOVSKI (4) ROBIN QUARRELLE PHOTOGRAPHY, @ROBINQPHOTO **INTERIOR DESIGN** BRAHAM MACNICOLL STUDIO, @BRAHAMMACNICOLLSTUDIO

4

SPARK INSPIRATION

For some, relaxing is cosying up with a book or listening to music, for others it's more creative or spending time with family. Let your personal passions be reflected in your snug design. Here, walls and ceilings have been drenched in a warm peach shade, which is deepened by the mantelpiece and window frames in a darker red. Green and blue accents bring a brighter and fun element to the scheme, resulting in a snug that feels warm but also uplifting and inspiring. When playing with so many colours on the walls, more muted furniture – like the grey sofa and wooden flooring, side table and chair – ground the space, preventing it from overwhelming.

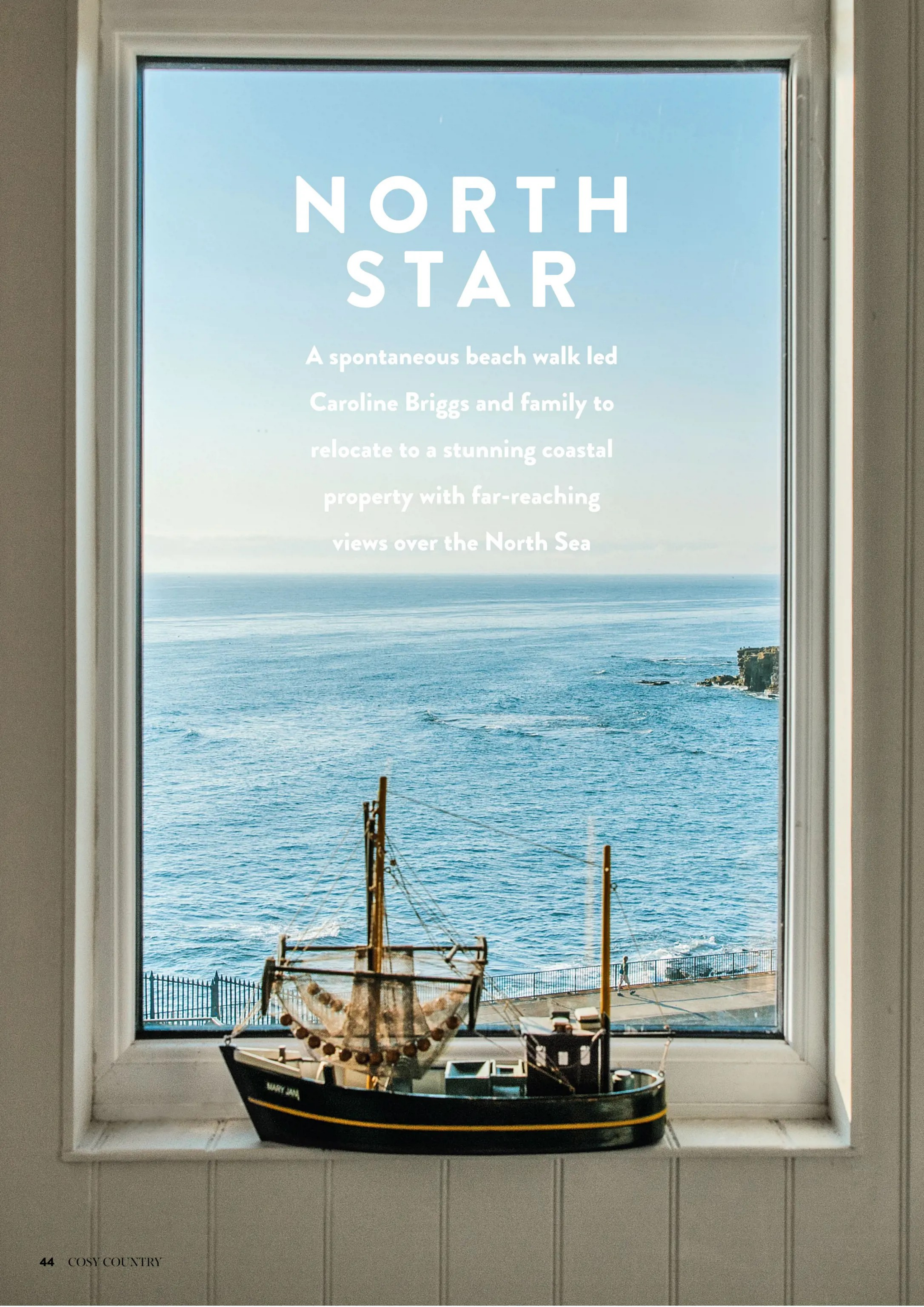
Sofa upholstered in Donegal pure wool in Slate, with **footstool** in Franklin pure wool in Evergreen, all Moon

Space **designed** by Braham MacNicoll Studio. For similar **blind** fabric, try Jessica Osborne

5

HIDDEN JOY

Many of us love to relax in front of a film or the latest boxset; however, TVs aren't the most beautiful addition to a room. 'When integrating a television, we recommend anchoring it with custom cabinetry. This creates a framed look and allows for the addition of shelving to display decorative accessories, drawing attention away from the television itself. For a more elegant touch, consider adding panelled folding doors that can conceal the television when not in use. When closed, these doors can feature artwork, transforming the space into a stylish wall display,' says Lucy MacNicoll, co-founder at Braham MacNicoll Studio.



NORTH STAR

A spontaneous beach walk led Caroline Briggs and family to relocate to a stunning coastal property with far-reaching views over the North Sea

LIVING ROOM The old oak desk used to belong to Caroline's grandfather. A pretty lamp provides illumination for drawing and writing. Similar **desk**, Vinterior. **Desk lamp**, Rowen & Wren. **Curtains**, Blinds2Go

Serendipity played a helping hand when Caroline Briggs and her husband, Dan, were searching for a new area in which to settle. 'We found the property almost by fate,' explains Caroline as she describes their decision to leave London after eight years of living in the capital and venture back up north. A flat in Newcastle provided a temporary first step, while they searched for a house for themselves and their children, Jude and Elsa. 'We knew we wanted a proper family home, but we couldn't decide on the exact location. Then, during a casual winter's walk along the beach at Whitley Bay, Caroline felt a keen sense of belonging. 'I knew instantly that this was where I wanted to live,' she says. 'Fortunately, Dan agreed, with one clear stipulation: if we were going to live on the coast, we had to be able to see the sea.'

Caroline clicked on to Rightmove, and lo and behold, a stunning period gem revealed itself. 'It was the very first house I spotted online – a beautiful double-fronted Edwardian terrace with only a road between it and the North Sea. I remember shouting to Dan that I had found "our" house!' she laughs. 'The Minton tiled hallway, grand fireplaces, ceiling roses and far-reaching views of the bay gave her such wonderful bone structure and elegance. It felt like fate.'

Finally, after years of living in flats, Caroline felt she had a house with generous proportions and elegant period charm that they could transform into the perfect family home. 'I wanted a house we could shape and grow into, somewhere that reflected the style I love and respected the building's history. I got to work quite quickly once the house was ours, and it has been a very long labour of love ever since.'

Immediately after moving in, it became apparent that the house needed a full damp-proof course. Then it was a case of taking each room and transforming the decor to suit. 'Thankfully, the previous owner had done much of the aesthetic heavy lifting. She had reinstated many of the big original features, installing marble fireplaces, restoring ceilings and fitting cast-iron radiators. The bones were beautiful.'

Stylistically, though, it was quite different from Caroline's taste, as shared on her Instagram @edwardian_seaside_home. As a professional photographer, her creative eye won't rest until everything is just so, something that has played out particularly well in the kitchen renovation. 'Originally, it was very dark and poky, with a garage sitting in the large yard behind. We knocked down the garage and extended outwards to create a much bigger kitchen space.' Now it really is the charming centrepiece of the home. 'I decided I didn't want a standard, off-the-shelf kitchen, then my sister spotted a reclaimed Victorian kitchen in a local antiques shop – I knew instantly it was the one. We built the room around it, adding marble worktops and Delft-style tiles from Fired Earth, which I absolutely adore.'

The couple also repurposed some 100-year-old herringbone parquet flooring from a nearby school. 'I love the thought that it carries its own stories. Over the decades, thousands of children, including our own, have walked and sat on this floor.'

The bathroom and attic room were the other major projects, with pieces sourced specifically to suit. Stripped wooden glazed doors were found online and used to section areas of the attic, adding period charm in the process. In fact, throughout, reclaimed wood sits beautifully alongside an enviable collection of time-worn vintage pieces, keeping the narrative flowing from room to room. 'The weathered wood creates a softness that reflects the way the Edwardian house has been battered and shaped by the elements externally,' says Caroline. 'The coastal setting has influenced absolutely everything I've done in the house and a lot of my choices are inspired directly by what I see out of my windows every day. We are so lucky to have those incredible sunrises over the bay and the ever-changing coastal skies, and I love how the rooms shift and evolve with that light, reinforcing the connection between the interiors, the architecture and the coast.'

See wearethetwins.co.uk

AT HOME WITH

OWNER Caroline Briggs, writer and photographer, lives here with husband Dan, who works in corporate financial management, and their children Elsa and Jude.

HOUSE An Edwardian terrace in Whitley Bay. It comprises two reception rooms, a kitchen-diner, four bedrooms, a study and two bathrooms.

LIVING ROOM An alcove is the perfect place for books, and a library-style ladder allows for easy access. Similar **ladder**, Ramsay Ladders. **Floor lamp** and **shade**, Rowen & Wren. Similar **coffee table**, Vinterior

LIVING ROOM A large glazed cabinet holds lots of family mementos and its woody tone works beautifully with the green walls. **Walls** in Treron, Farrow & Ball. **Floor lamp** and **shade**, vintage; for similar try Vinterior

KITCHEN A joiner made the island using reclaimed wood. Caroline and Dan have collected some stunning vintage pieces, such as the pair of Holophane light shades above the cooker. Similar **lights**, Pooky

KITCHEN The vintage units were found in an antiques shop, accessorised with lace panels. Pretty Delft tiles were chosen for the splashback. For a similar **kitchen**, try The Haberdasher's, deVol. Delft **tiles**, Fired Earth

KITCHEN The use of natural wood keeps the space grounded. A second-hand table and classic Thonet bentwood bistro chairs add the finishing touches. Similar **table** and **chairs**, Vinterior. **Tablecloth**, Rowen & Wren

HALLWAY The original Minton tiled floor creates a stunning focal point. **Walls** in School House White; **architrave** in Old White, both Farrow & Ball. For a similar hallway **console table**, try Elisabeth James Antiques

'We found the glazed doors online and used them to section the attic. The weathered wood creates a softness that reflects how the coastal house has been shaped by the elements'

MAIN BEDROOM Caroline's decorating palette has been inspired by the colours of the sea and sky, with soft greens and blues. Walnut **bedside cabinet**, vintage; for similar try Vinterior. **Carpet**, Alternative Flooring

CAROLINE'S COUNTRY LIFE

SIMPLE PLEASURES 'Looking north over the sea, the dark skies have often rewarded us with spectacular views of the Northern Lights. It's one of those small wonders of coastal living that never quite loses its thrill.'

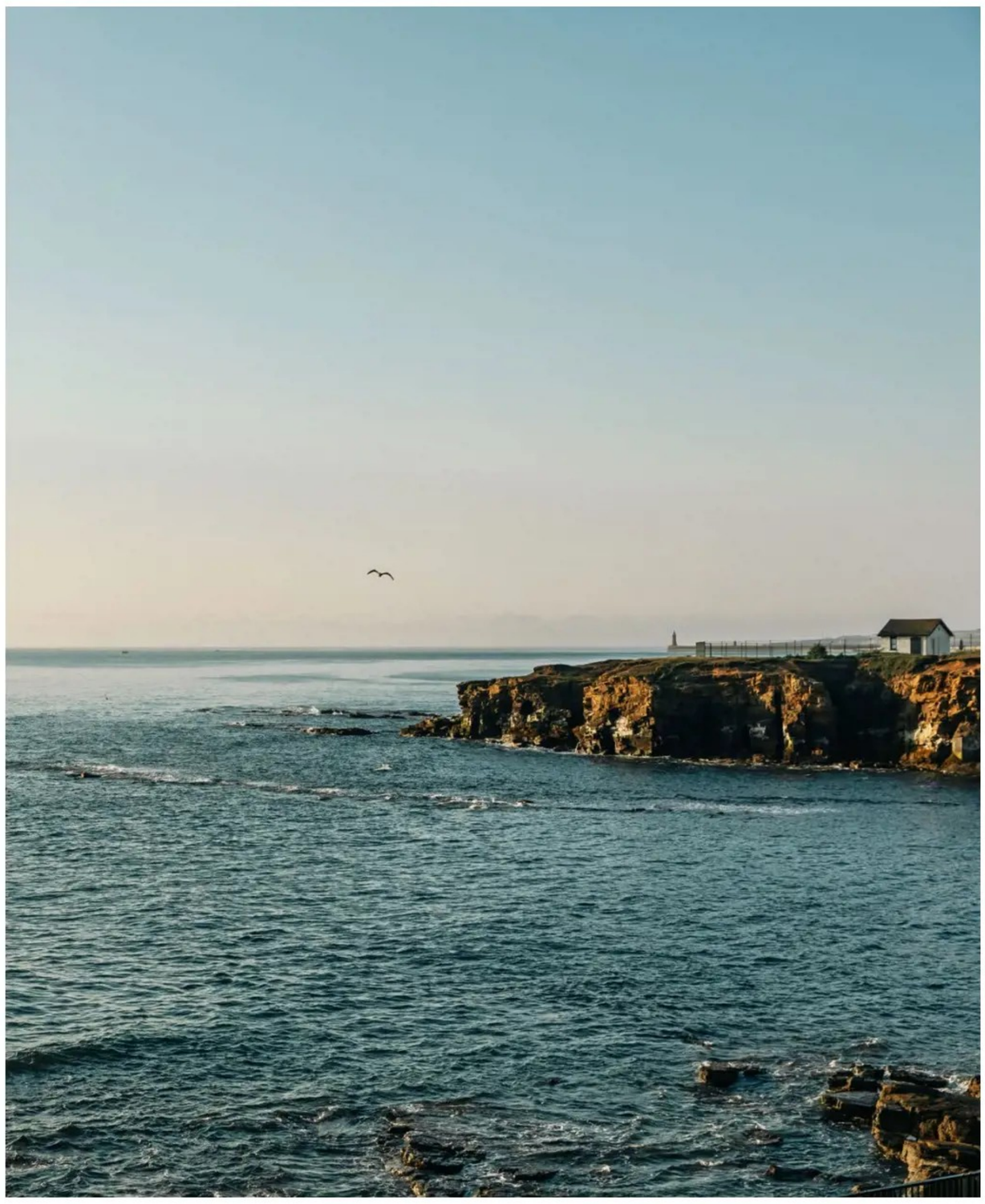
SHOP AT 'Behålla (@behalla_store), which sells vintage, homeware, magazines and plants. We also have Keel Row Books, a fantastic second-hand bookshop that is always a joy to browse (keelrowbooks.com).'

EAT AT 'Riley's Fish Shack (rileysfishshack.com). Amazing fresh fish on an amazing beach. What's not to love?'

VISIT 'St Mary's Island, which is only accessible when the tide is out. Only the very brave will climb the 137 steps to the top of the lighthouse for spectacular views (northtyneside.gov.uk/st-marys-lighthouse).'

MAIN BEDROOM The walls were clad in tongue and groove panelling which adds warmth and is a lovely nod to the coastal location. **Walls** in Blue Gray, Farrow & Ball. **Bed**, Naturalmat. **Bed throw**, Bloomingville

MAIN BEDROOM The double aspect of the house meant that the attic was large. Caroline and Dan turned the entire space into a spacious suite with areas to relax, sleep and bathe. Similar vintage **armchairs**, Vinterior



COASTAL VIEWS When Caroline and Dan were house-hunting, their main requirement was a property with sea views, so this place, with its dramatic vista over the bay to the North Sea, fit the bill perfectly

DRESSING ROOM The attic space was large enough for Caroline to partition off a section for a dedicated dressing area. **Table lamps**, Rowen & Wren. **Runner**, Dunelm. **Curtains**, The Pure Edit

EN SUITE Caroline found the washstand on Facebook Marketplace and added a marble top and reclaimed brass sink. Similar **washstand**, Vinterior. **Floor tiles**, Walls and Floors. Similar **wall lights**, Lamp24

FEATURE SARA EMSLIE
PHOTOGRAPHS CAROLINE BRIGGS

IT'S TIME TO LIGHT THE FIRE

Clean your chimney, order your logs and settle down for cosy evenings by the fireside this autumn with these hearth-warming tips

Lighting the first fire of the season is a ritual to look forward to, ushering in cosy evenings, meditative moments and perhaps a nightcap before bedtime – all of which will be ruined by a cloud of soot from an unswept chimney and smoke from damp logs. Here's our expert guide on how to prep your chimney and fireplace, so your latest flame doesn't burn out.

BOOK A PROFESSIONAL CHIMNEY SWEEP

You'll need the services of an expert to ensure the inside of your chimney is swept clear of soot and debris. 'The chimney is best swept in the spring or summer months, so your fireplace is ready to use as soon as the cooler weather arrives,' says Vicky Naylor, general manager at ACR Stoves. This is true whether you have a chimney for an open fire, or a flue for a wood burner. A chimney sweep will also check for damage to ensure it's safe to light your fire.

CLEAN YOUR FIREPLACE

Once the chimney has been swept, it's time to clean your fireplace. Scrub the bricks, stone or tiles that surround it to remove soot and dirt. Wipe the glass on your wood burner so you can enjoy watching the flicker of the flames. Sweep the inside of your stove or fireplace to remove old ash and soot – leftover wood ash can be disposed of with household waste, or else recycled in a compost heap or soil patch.

GATHER YOUR WOOD

If you are planning to burn wood, be sure to purchase seasoned logs from a sustainably managed source. 'Never burn wet, treated, polished, varnished or oiled woods, or waste woods such as pallets, furniture or fencing,' advises Phil Wood, UK Country Manager at Contura. 'Good quality hardwood species such as ash, oak, beech and birch will burn the cleanest and longest, with a bright flame. Avoid soft woods such as pine, fir and cypress, which burn quickly and produce more smoke.' Make sure any logs fit your fireplace perfectly.

CONSIDER YOUR LOG STORAGE

Having a larger log store outdoors, and smaller, decorative storage areas inside the home beside the fire, establishes the perfect balance between style and practicality. From baskets to crates and custom-built wall niches, getting creative with your indoor log storage can establish an eye-catching focal point.

ADD THE FINISHING TOUCHES

Some final decorative touches can enhance the feeling of cosiness. You could decorate the mantel, arrange fireside tools, and style the hearth with candles and lanterns. With soft blankets and cushions on your fireside seating, these simple additions can help to create a relaxing ambience when sat around the fire.

MINDFUL LIVING
Transform the ritual of tending the fire from Cinderella drudgery to mindful moments by embracing its tech-free connection to hearth and home

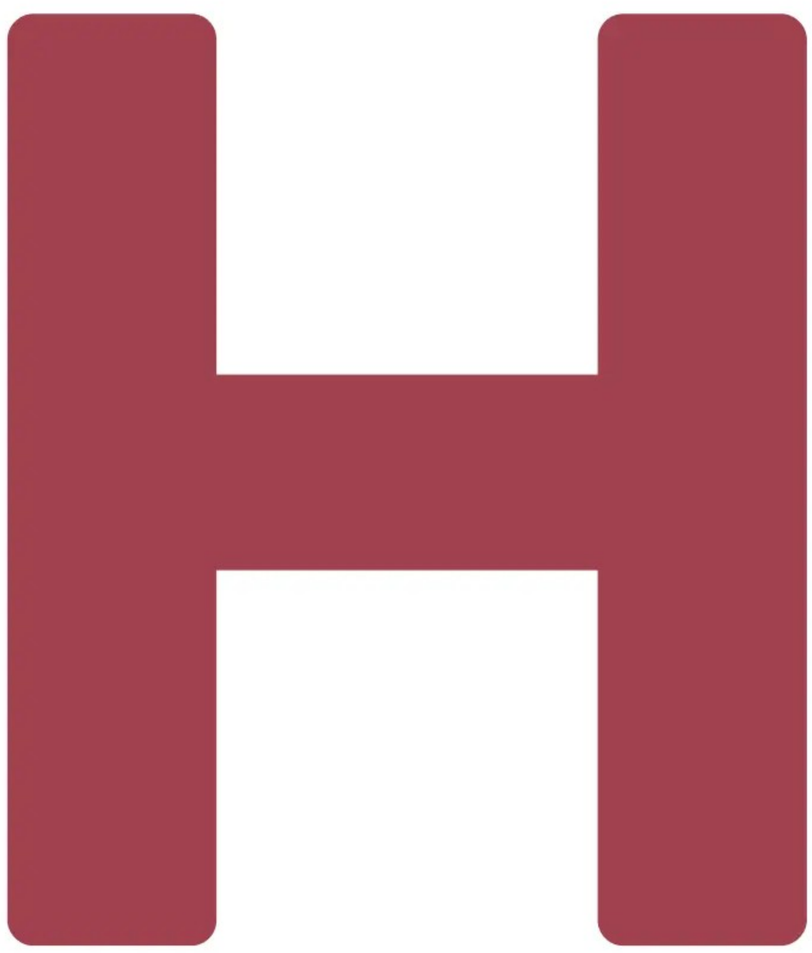
FEATURE ZARA STACEY
PHOTOGRAPH FUTURECONTENTHUB.COM

'Seasoned hardwoods such as ash, oak, beech and birch will burn the cleanest and longest with a bright flame. Avoid soft woods such as pine and fir, which produce more smoke'

KEEPING IT IN THE FAMILY

Two decades after living here as newlyweds, Zoe and Geoff Sayers have brought this Devon barn conversion on the family farm into the 21st century

SITTING AREA With large windows, raw materials and a real fire, the rustic feel is softened by squishy sofas and exquisite linens. **Sofas** in Dusty Rose and Espresso, Sofa.com. Green bubble **lamp**, Pooky



Historically an animal shelter with a tin roof, this idyllic barn on the south Devon coast has served the Sayers family since the 1950s. It had become a camping place and a setting for big family parties, until Zoe Sayers' mother-in-law converted it in the 1990s. It became Zoe and her husband Geoff's first home as a newly married couple when they moved back to the family farm 20 years ago. 'It was really, really rustic,' says Zoe. 'There was no fitted kitchen and no bath, so I bought an old roll-top from a reclamation yard.'

The facilities may have been basic, but the barn made up for the lack of amenities by being perfectly placed in the landscape. Nestled against a bank, it has uninterrupted views down a short valley to the sea.

'It's deeply peaceful,' says Zoe. 'The building seems to have grown organically into the landscape.' Both she and Geoff wanted to keep that sense of being close to the natural world when they began the barn's renovation in early 2020, while updating the building in a more contemporary style. First, they secured planning permission to add a dormer window to the main bedroom upstairs, which makes the space feel lighter and more open. After much deliberation, Zoe decided on hardwood-framed windows and doors throughout as a durable answer to the salt-laden winter gales in this exposed location. Downstairs, she converted an area previously used for storage into a striking entrance hall as well as a second bedroom, which opens onto those huge views.

A simple fireplace ensures the living room is cosy and inviting on wild winter nights, but the barn also has state-of-the-art electric heating. 'Electricity is the cleanest energy source,' says Zoe. 'We have wind turbines and solar panels on the farm, so we're energy neutral now. We're very proud of that.'

Zoe and Geoff's commitment to sound ecological decisions didn't end there. 'I really hate light pollution,' says Zoe, who worries about the impact of additional light on local wildlife. Getting the right balance for the barn wasn't easy, but she and interior designer Siobhan Hayles chose a system of layered lighting, starting with low-level wall lights on sensors. Like all their contractors, Siobhan lives locally. 'I absolutely loved working with Siobhan; it was very collaborative,' says Zoe. 'Geoff and I wanted to chime with the building and Siobhan really heard that.'

Tackling such a sensitive build would be tricky at the best of times. Doing it during the on/off restrictions of 2020 presented Zoe with all kinds of challenges, particularly when it came to finding materials. 'The project went very slowly, due to Covid, but that actually played into our hands, as we had time to make well-considered design decisions.' These choices really add to the sense of the barn being rooted in the landscape as the front steps are cut from granite found in the surrounding fields and the richly toned elm used for the upstairs floors was grown on the farm. The cedarwood used for the entrance gates and as wall cladding in the main bedroom came from nearby Dartington.

The biggest delays Zoe faced were waiting for the glass factory to reopen and some of the soft furnishings to be delivered, but the need to source things creatively has proven to be an unexpected silver lining. 'We wanted eccentric. There have been lots of good parties here and you can feel the energy of the place. We didn't want to lose that.'

Open beams, slate floors and a neutral palette create the perfect backdrop for the rich textures and jewel-like colours of the furnishings. 'I'm really proud of the end result. It's cosy, but still very natural,' says Zoe.

To enquire about renting Ivy Cove, visit uniquehomestays.com

AT HOME WITH

OWNER Zoe and Geoff Sayers, who moved to the barn in 2000. They now live in the main farmhouse and run the organic dairy farm. They have three children: Plum, Charlie and Monty.

HOUSE Ivy Cove is a rustic two-bedroom barn, first converted by Geoff's mother.

SITTING AREA The real fire provides a welcome focal point. Side **table**, Rockett St George. Wall **lights**, Pooky. Floor **lamp**, Graham and Green. Red striped **decorative item**, Oka. **Walls**, Slaked Lime, Little Greene

'The elm for the floors was grown on the farm and the granite cut for the steps was found in the surrounding fields'

KITCHEN-DINER In this open-plan space, the kitchen needed to be both functional and beautiful. **Cabinetry** from Howdens is dressed with brass accents. **Knobs**, Wayland Hardware. Cup **handles**, eBay; for similar try Ironmongery Experts

MAIN BEDROOM Zoe's creativity features strongly in this room, with a freestanding headboard finished in Venetian plaster by Earthcoat. **Bed**, Loaf. **Curtains**, Stockholm stripe in Dove and Winter, Vanessa Arbuthnott

ENTRANCE HALL The vaulted ceiling and roof-light enhance the feeling of airiness. **Walls**, Milan, Francesca's Paints. **Tongue and groove** and **cupboards**, Studio Green, Farrow & Ball. **Tiles**, Mandarin Stone

MAIN ENSUITE This space is finished throughout in pigmented microcement to create a Mediter§ranean feel. **Plaster**, Earthcoat. **Woodwork**, Secret Room, Earthborn Paints. **Taps** and **wash-basins**, Victorian Plumbing

DEVONSHIRE VIEWS
The couple restored the barn with the exposed coastline – and salty storms – in mind, opting for hardwood windows to weather the changing seasons

ZOE'S COUNTRY LIFE

EAT AT 'The Hairy Barista (thehairybarista.co.uk) is always our café and snack stop in Totnes. It's a tiny place, but we love the "build your own drinks" menu.'

VISIT 'Totnes market on Saturdays for all the foodie stalls. There are so many delicious treats and it's a great place to spend the morning."

SHOP AT 'Ben's Farm Shop (bensfarmshop.co.uk), Yealmpton. It's a proper independent farm shop selling vegetables and meat; good raw ingredients that are locally produced and organic.'

HEARTH OF THE HOME

Get ready to hunker down on chilly nights with our toasty fireside tips

FRAME THE FOCAL POINT

Create an instant cosy nook around a woodburning stove by framing it with a contrasting paint colour on the wall, using a deep shade. Tiles behind the fire or stove can also add an unexpected dash of colour and pattern; just check that they're made to withstand temperature. Or why not wallpaper the chimney breast for a decorative statement. You can also paint your fire surround the same colour as the wall for a seamless finish.

STORING LOGS INSIDE

When stowing logs, they need some air flow to prevent mould forming. Wooden framed stores and woven or metal baskets are ideal; avoid plastic boxes as they may cause moisture build-up. For safety, ensure kindling and wood isn't stacked against a stove or fire. Make space for logs by repurposing a bookshelf, stacking vintage crates or using space under a bench or console table. ➛

KNOW YOUR WOOD

Look for seasoned, kiln-dried logs or wood briquettes with less than 20% moisture for efficient burning and to reduce pollution. Look for the Ready To Burn seal. Check out Kindwood for locally sourced sustainable wood. You can also gather and season logs at home; soft wood takes at least six months to dry, while hard wood takes up to two years – a moisture metre will determine when it's at 20% or below.

MAKE A SCENTED FIRE LIGHTER

Gather fragrant ingredients, such as pine cones, cinnamon sticks, fresh rosemary and sage, plus dried orange and lime slices. Cut an old newspaper into squares, bundle the ingredients and simply roll and wrap like a cracker, securing the ends with twine.

CREATE A COSY SPOT

For a sociable layout, place sofas and chairs opposite each other. No room for a coffee table? An ottoman can double up as a place to pop a tray of drinks, while nesting tables or small footstools can be moved around and tucked away when not in use. An L-shaped arrangement works better for a narrow room. Anchor the setting with a rug. For safety, keep furniture around 1m away from the fire.

Petersham three-seater **sofa** in linen union; Cosy **chair**; Kingham **coffee table**; Norton stool; Flokati **rug**; Cowley metal **floor lamp**, all The White Company →

STYLE UP THE MANTEL

A large, statement mirror or painting always helps boost this focal point either propped (but secured) on the mantel or positioned above. Create a changing display with flowers or foliage that alters with the season (real or faux). Avoid cluttering the shelf, but group items at either end using three key items at varied heights. It's the perfect spot for family photographs in small and medium frames.

For similar, try Feather and shell art, Cotswold Luxe.
Try Old Havana pitcher, Anthropologie

FEATURE MICHELA COLLING
PHOTOGRAPHS FUTURECONTENTHUB.COM

WORK IT OUT OF SEASON

Create a focal point of your fireplace or hearth during the warmer months. Try an arrangement of vases, picking a similar palette and adding floral stems. Alternatively, fill the space with a variety of potted plants, placing taller ones at the back and smaller or trailing varieties at the front. Try this with lanterns and tealight holders.

Ceramic **vases** and **jugs**, from a selection, Oka

KEEP IT SPICK AND SPAN

Have the chimney swept every year to remove any soot build-up or blockages; it reduces the risk of a chimney fire and also creates a better draw, making the stove or fire run more efficiently. Ask a sweep to check for any damage that may need repair and have the stove serviced. Sweep out the ashes from your fire grate or stove after every use and clean the glass by wiping with a soft, damp cloth.

Fireside **tools**; fireside **bucket**, is similar; household **dustpan** and **brush**, all Garden Trading

COMFORT ZONE

Relaxed family living in a Grade II-listed Sussex property gave designer Alex Willcock the inspiration for a father and son furniture business

LIVING ROOM Artwork casually placed on wooden shelves and a row of vintage terracotta pots filled with lavender create a relaxed country feel. Marnie **sofa** in Malachite linen; Song **sofa** in Sunstone linen, Maker&Son

The idea of a comfortable life in the country may conjure up a quaint rural idyll and a slower pace of life. For cabinetmaker and furniture designer Alex Willcock, two decades of family life in Kemps House, a Grade II-listed property in rural Sussex, proved instead to be the catalyst for a new business venture – one that has put any notion of a gentler pace of living firmly on the back burner.

'In many ways, the house is the third founder of Maker&Son,' laughs Alex, referring to the luxury furniture brand that he created with his eldest son, Felix, which purports to make the comfiest sofas in the world. 'Comfort has always been a real priority to us as a family, and it's the house that has enabled this way of life and given birth to all that we do.'

Having returned to the UK from a stint in Australia, where he met Felix's mother, Sophie Conran, Alex headed up the creative, buying and marketing departments at The Conran Shop before launching his own design agency in London. Kemps House was the perfect retreat at the end of a busy day.

'We wanted to move out of London and I saw a picture of this house online. The moment we arrived, I knew it would be our home,' recalls Alex. 'My mission from the very beginning was to create a home that my children would enjoy spending time in – and with beautiful countryside, a small local village with a station only 40 minutes from central London and the most incredible house, what's not to like?'

With its elegant proportions, symmetrical placing of period casement windows and a hipped roof with a tiny dormer window hinting at the characterful charm inside, Kemps House is in many ways a quintessential English country house. But it also bears the signs of historical changes, with the original 1660s timber facade having been replaced at some point with local red and black brickwork, and several side windows filled in to avoid the window taxes introduced in the late 17th century. Not that this deflects from the property's appeal; rather, it cements it as a house that has evolved to suit its inhabitants' needs and wishes over time, something that is apparent to this day in the way it inspires the designers who live there now.

The house and how it functions as a family home has become an integral part of the brand identity, with rooms used as spaces to test the designs and paint colours changing on a whim to showcase a new fabric colourway. 'It's really all very fluid and we're forever changing things around. For instance, the main living room might be the set of a new sofa photoshoot one day, then the next it's being rearranged for a family event at the weekend.'

Maker&Son furniture is dotted throughout. The generously sized rooms lend themselves to the long, deep and wide proportions of the sofas, chairs and beds. At the same time, the period backdrop of centuries-old floorboards, the fireplaces in the living rooms and the original 17th-century staircase provide a distinctive contrast to the designers' modern style.

'We're always doing something new,' says Alex, 'and in a funny way, the juxtaposition of an old house and lots of newness seems to really work.' This is evident, too, in Felix's contemporary bentwood lighting designs, which loop dramatically down from the ceilings (his workshop is in an outbuilding to the side of the property), and in Alex's artwork and carpentry, such as the wooden candlesticks in the living room and the elaborate chair in the bedroom. Then there are the displays of vintage shoe lasts and old tools, attesting to a lifelong love of traditional craft and design.

'Our house is filled with things that have come from a lifetime of collecting,' says Alex. 'And almost everything has some significance to me, with many of the pieces made by myself or by Felix over the years. I never thought it would be possible to fall in love with a house but this is a home that really nurtures love,' he concludes. A love for a house so eloquently reciprocated by a maker and his son...

makerandson.com

AT HOME WITH

OWNER Alex Willcock lives here, with his children Felix, Coco, Song, Otter and Hero visiting at weekends. Alex runs Maker&Son, a luxury furniture business, with his son Felix Conran.

HOUSE A Grade II-listed house dating back to the 1660s, with six bedrooms.

SNUG Generous sofas and an inviting fireplace make this a favourite spot for family nights in. Tones of olive, mustard and rust enrich the cosy scheme, which features Alex's handmade candlesticks

SNUG Alex Willcock and Felix Conran (left), the father-and-son duo and joint founders behind the brand Maker&Son. **Walls** in Manor House Gray, Farrow & Ball. **Cushions**, The Conran Shop

EXTERIOR With its elegant facade and woodland setting, Kemps House is an enchanting sight. Topiary trees line the path that leads to the front door, giving the home a truly rustic countryside feel

‘The house has enabled this way of life as a family – and this way of life has given birth to all that we do’

KITCHEN The butcher’s block central island, classic butler’s sink and Shaker panelled cabinets give this room a modern country feel. Felix’s bentwood ceiling light makes a striking focal point. **Cabinets** in Breakfast Room Green, Farrow & Ball

ALEX'S COUNTRY LIFE

VISIT 'The South Downs (southdownstrust.org.uk) offer miles of gorgeous walks, particularly in the spring and early summer, with stunning views over the chalklands to the coast and out to sea.'

SHOP AT 'Ardingly Antiques Fair (iacf.co.uk) is right on our doorstep and it's a wonderful place to find all sorts of vintage and antique furniture and accessories. Be sure to get there early to snap up the best pieces.'

EAT AT 'Moshimo (moshimo.co.uk) in Brighton, a sushi restaurant that champions sustainable fishing and also vegan food. The menu is extensive and the decor is contemporary Japanese.'

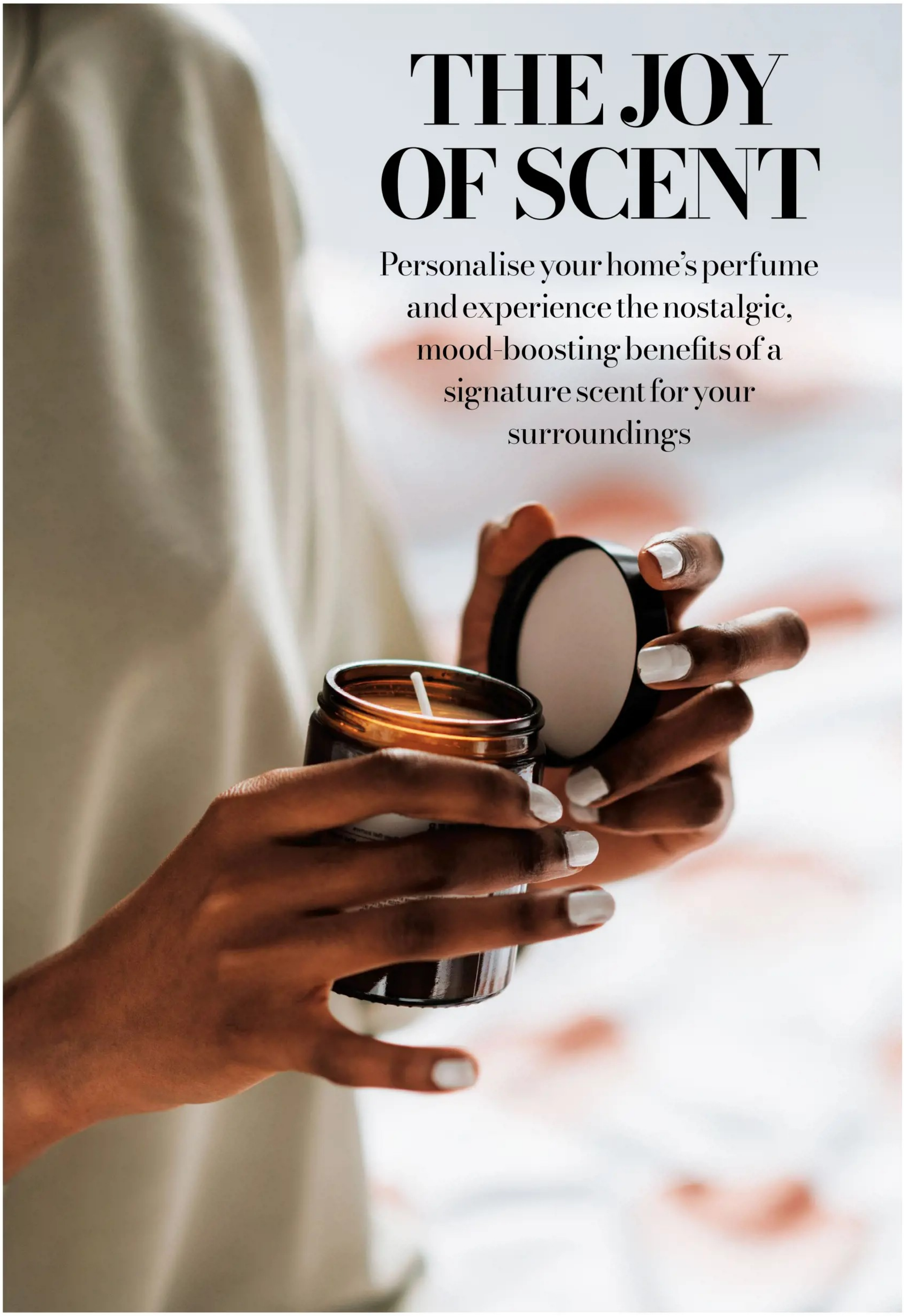
BEDROOM Traditional wooden toys bring an element of timeless charm to this modern tonal scheme. Song **bed** in Teal velvet, Maker&Son. **Walls** in Dix Blue, Farrow & Ball. **Cushion**, The Conran Shop

BATHROOM This room is pretty and elegant with its period-style fittings, brick tiles and an uplifting shade of pink to add a touch of modernity to the space. **Walls** in Nancy's Blushes, Farrow & Ball

FEATURE SARA EMSLIE
PHOTOGRAPHS ALUN CALLENDER

MAIN BEDROOM
Dusty pink walls perfectly complement the varying tones of wood, including an antique elm bench, vintage shoe lasts and a side table made by Alex. **Walls** in Setting Plaster, Farrow & Ball

'In a funny way, the juxtaposition of an old house and lots of new ness seems to really work'



THE JOY OF SCENT

Personalise your home's perfume and experience the nostalgic, mood-boosting benefits of a signature scent for your surroundings

Most of us associate scent with people, places, food and flowers. But what about home? Finding a signature fragrance for the place we live, even if it's part of a wardrobe of personalised scents that vary through the seasons, can instantly change how we feel once we step over the threshold. It's a heady power – one that works both physiologically and psychologically – and which is now increasingly recognised by scientists and scent-makers. 'The olfactory nerve is directly linked to the part of the brain that monitors memories and emotions. As such, scent affects mood, concentration, memory recall and our feelings. In fact, 75 per cent of all emotions generated every day are due to smell,' state the experts at Mood Media.

The self-contained, private nature of our homes makes them the perfect scent environment. It's why we light a fragranced candle to help us relax after a difficult day, or sink into gorgeously perfumed bubbles when we want to feel better in ourselves. But we can do more than reach for the nearest 'smelly'. Franky Rousell is founder and CEO of sensory interior design practice, Jolie Studio. 'We love playing with fragrance as this has a real impact on creating memories and subliminally tackling anxiety and stress,' she explains. 'One of the smallest changes we can make in a space is to light a candle, which can provide both spiritual and healing benefits by tapping into vital olfactory senses, helping to shape the atmosphere to reflect the intended mood for the room.' ➛

SCENTS TO CHANGE YOUR MOOD

If the smell of baking takes you back to your grandmother's kitchen, or a certain suntan lotion conjures up images of afternoons on a Cornish beach, then you're experiencing what scientists call the Proust Effect. 'Scents have the ability to spark vivid memories, and after a scent has been associated with an experience, it is able to evoke the associated emotions when later encountered,' say the authors of a 2022 report.

'Memory association is one of the most powerful reasons scents can work so well. Any fragrance – a loved perfume, candle, flower, even the aroma of a meal – can have a profound effect on our mood and wellbeing,' says Glenda Taylor, an aromatherapist and creator of home fragrance products for her company, Angelico.

Certain scents seem to trigger a collective response. Cinnamon is associated with warmth, cosiness, happiness and relaxation; peppermint creates a sense of positivity and calm, while lemon scents are linked to feelings of energy and lightness.

If you're not sure what your happy scent is, Franky suggests rummaging through your perfume drawer and seeing what you already lean towards. 'Fragrances have base, middle and top notes, and the base note is the one that lingers the longest and is the heaviest. It's the underlying humdrum of what should be in your whole home. In each zone or room, switch up your middle and top notes. The latter is the thing you smell first, so you'll notice a shift from room to room if you adjust it.'

SCENT ZONING AND LAYERING

'I'm a great zoner,' says Glenda. 'Some scents shouldn't be used in certain areas. Peppermint, never in the bedroom (too stimulating); sandalwood, never in the workplace (too calming); vetiver should never scent the kitchen (too tenacious). On the flip side, frankincense, vetiver and sandalwood are fantastic in the bedroom. And all citrus oils are great in the kitchen as they don't interfere with cooking smells and are bright and sparkly.' Glenda recommends putting a happy scent in an area of your home that you enter frequently, such as a hallway. 'A reed diffuser is great for this,' she says. 'You can regulate the fragrance by turning just one or two reeds whenever you want a mood and scent boost.

Lesley Bramwell, founder of home fragrance brand Essence & Alchemy and author of *Fragrance Your Home* (Quadrille), suggests varying your scenting method room by room. 'In your entryway, for example, a reed diffuser or simply fresh flowers work well – the airflow from people walking past will carry the fragrance.' In the bedroom, you could prepare yourself for sleep with a calming fragrance, such as Jo Malone's bedtime collection, which includes a lavender and moonflower scented diffuser, candle and pillow mist for the ultimate, pre-bedtime wind-down routine.

If you want to switch up your home's fragrance – adding in some of those middle and top notes that Franky suggests – experiment with layering different scents. 'Peppermint, spearmint and lime are perfect workmates,' says Glenda. 'If you are using an electric or candle diffuser, rather than a reed diffuser, then you can tweak the fragrance occasionally by adding a different essential oil to your mix, too. This will prevent you from becoming "fragrance-blind" to your blend.'

THE RITUAL OF SCENT

You may not feel fully dressed until you have a dab of perfume on your wrists and behind your ears. Think of your home in the same way, building on a signature base note to curate a scentscape for your living space. The simple ritual of lighting a candle or spritzing a room spray can be a tiny moment of olfactory joy in a busy day. Lesley has high praise for incense sticks for achieving this: 'They don't need as much time or investment as a candle; the act of burning one is calming and ritualistic and creates an instant scent that lingers.'

FEATURE ANDRÉA CHILDS, ELLEN FINCH **PHOTOGRAPHS** FUTURECONTENTHUB.COM/ DAVID BRITTAIN; ALAMY STOCK PHOTO/ WIRESTOCK INC, IMAGE PROFESSIONALS GMBH

'Personalise your home's perfume and experience the nostalgic, mood-boosting benefits of a signature scent for your surroundings'

GRAND DESIGNS

Sam Gee and her partner Edel have transformed their striking Edwardian villa with rich colours, antique finds and layers of warmth, creating a home that's as welcoming as it is refined

LIVING ROOM This elegant space combines period detailing with comfort. Originally painted in navy, it has been refreshed with grey-blue Long Acre by Mylands. **Rug**, Birdie Fortescue. **Cushions**, Fabrics and Papers

LIVING ROOM Light floods through the simply dressed bay window, which frames the view beyond. **Chandelier**, Agapanthus Interiors. **Sofa**, John Sankey; **footstool** in Pienza, both sourced by Fabrics and Papers

Set back from a tree-lined road behind wrought-iron gates lies the striking red-brick Edwardian villa of Sam Gee and her partner, Edel. 'The stunning facade and huge bay windows had me at first glance,' says Sam, who moved here in 2012. 'It felt incredibly grand, but when we stepped inside, it was homely too, with beautiful proportions and a fireplace in most rooms.'

The house, built in 1902, was in good condition. Most of the renovation had been completed 10 years before, so there was no major structural work to be done – but the interiors felt too neutral for Sam's taste. 'It wasn't a blank canvas, but it wasn't very "us" either. The layout worked beautifully, and the kitchen and bathroom were in great condition, which was really appealing. We've learned that we're not the kind of people who enjoy living through major works.'

Sam and Edel turned their focus to the task of adding personality to their new home – layering colour, pattern and interest. 'It was about softening the spaces and adding in the things we love – wallpaper, fabrics, antiques and art.' Although Sam has a natural flair for colour and detail, she also called on the expertise of interior designer Claire Botha from Geek Vintique to help refine her ideas in a few of the rooms. 'Claire was brilliant; she helped me recognise when less is more, and introduced colours I might not have chosen on my own,' says Sam. 'She really understood what we were trying to achieve, which was something relaxed and refined, with just the right amount of drama.'

The first areas they tackled were the bedrooms and breakfast room. 'I've learned over time that I like a bit of richness – nothing too bright or bold; I love earthy tones, brown-based palettes, with contrast and pattern,' Sam explains. 'I think old houses wear colour really well.'

Panelling was added in some of the rooms – including the main bedroom and breakfast room – to reflect the property's period character, but most of the changes have come from paint alone. In the kitchen, wooden cabinets have been given a fresh lease of life with a blush hue, while in the hallway, rich-brown woodwork paired with a bold-red gloss door has given the entrance a whole new identity. 'The front door was a game changer,' says Sam, 'and once we painted the surround to match, it looked so much grander, completely transforming the mood of the space.'

Sam wanted the interiors to feel both personal and lived in. Her style blends timeworn finds with modern pieces, while patterned fabrics and vibrant wallpapers sit alongside natural textures and soothing wall colours – a combination that gives the house its timeless feel. 'Balancing old and new pieces makes a space more interesting; I just have to be careful not to tip too far into old-fashioned.'

The latest updates in the living room and office reflect Sam's growing confidence with colour and pattern. A coral rug and botanical mural bring warmth to the pale-green office walls, while in the living room, deep grey-blue walls, an elegant fireplace and antique chandelier create a rich, cocooning feel. 'I love how the light pours through the bay windows on a winter's morning,' says Sam. 'The colours shift with the seasons, and the beautiful combination of fabrics that the lovely team at Fabric and Papers Interiors helped me with bring the rooms to life.'

Over the years, the house has evolved alongside Sam and Edel, each new layer adding depth and character. 'I'm always moving things around and adding little touches, but every room, apart from one, now feels right,' says Sam. 'I don't think a home like this ever stands still – it grows with you, reflects you, and somehow becomes more yours with every passing year. We're so proud of what we've achieved here. It's a beautiful place to live.'

AT HOME WITH

OWNERS Sam Gee, who runs a reward consultancy, lives with her partner Edel, a CIO, and their cockapoos.

HOUSE A five-bedroom Edwardian villa with kitchen, breakfast room, living room, dining room and office.

HALLWAY With its original stained glass, cornicing, skirting boards and Minton floor tiles, this area is rich with character. **Front door** in Incarnadine, Farrow & Ball. Asti **chandelier**, Pure White Lines

EXTERIOR The red-brick Edwardian villa has the quintessential mix of beautiful proportions, grandeur and a comforting homely feel

KITCHEN Smart black worksurfaces and flooring bring a modern-classic look to the prep and cooking area, while hardware in brushed brass adds a subtle chic finish. Try The Door Knocker Company for similar **cabinet knobs**

KITCHEN Continuing the cabinetry paint colour through to the walls in the adjoining breakfast room creates a unified look. **Cabinets** and **walls** in Setting Plaster, Farrow & Ball. **Island** in Jet Black, Little Greene

'The most transformative changes have been made with paint. In the kitchen, the tired wooden cabinets have been given a fresh lease of life with a soft, blush hue'

BREAKFAST ROOM This space, at the heart of the house, is the family's most-used room. A simple window treatment allows architectural features to shine. For similar **fabric** try Campbell linen, Warner House

BREAKFAST ROOM Classic furniture with statement lighting ensures a relaxed feel. **Walls** in Setting Plaster, Farrow & Ball. Braemar **sofa**, Tetrad. Starsky **chandelier**, Pooky. Bolshoi Ballet **prints**, Litten Tree Antiques

DINING ROOM With its north-facing aspect, this space is naturally dark, but Sam embraced this with a deep, warming scheme. **Walls** in Axia, Atelier Ellis. **Chair**, John Sankey. **Artwork**, Albi Art and Interiors

GUEST BEDROOM 'We wanted this room to have a luxurious feel,' says Sam, 'so we added an armchair and dressed the window with floor-length curtains.' **Headboard in** Lusso velvet in Garnet, Warner House

GUEST BEDROOM The bold botanical wallpaper creates a striking backdrop for black furniture. Hathersage **wallpaper**, Warner House. Venus **table lamp**, Pooky. Try Glastonbury **chandelier**, Lights2go

MAIN BEDROOM An antique chaise re-covered in a velvet by Ian Sanderson inspired the calm, sophisticated palette here, while an oversized headboard suits the room's proportions. **Walls** in Knightsbridge, Little Greene

FEATURE MARISHA TAYLOR
PHOTOGRAPHS JAMES FRENCH

SAM'S COUNTRY LIFE

SIMPLE PLEASURES 'Taking our two cockapoos, Ottie and Mr Munroe, for a walk around Upper Harlestone, Northamptonshire. We wander past beautiful houses, through rolling fields and along the stream that winds towards the woods. It's a place that always feels peaceful, no matter the season.'

SHOP AT 'For antique and vintage treasures, I love browsing online at Albi Art and Interiors, Agapanthus Interiors and Litten Tree Antiques, all of which stock the most beautiful and unique pieces.'

EAT AT 'We actually love eating at home, but now and then, we'll head out to Bartella's cafe in Northampton.'

MAIN BEDROOM Sam created this reading nook with a vintage armchair, and displayed one of her favourite artworks over the fireplace. Bobbin-leg **footstool**, John Sankey. **Artwork**, Agapanthus Interiors

Lighting the way

Look beyond layering to create a harmonious and versatile scheme that provides ample illumination and creates atmosphere

The importance of a layered lighting scheme cannot be underestimated; however, there is more to an illuminating space than co-ordinating task, accent and ambient lighting. Expertly planning the scheme, creating different circuits to maximise control and selecting the right bulbs for the job can really elevate a room's look and feel.

ALL IN THE PLANNING

When renovating or redecorating, lighting should be one of the first things you consider. 'We always advise thinking about lighting much earlier in the design process than people tend to do,' says Jo Plant, chief creative officer at Pooky. 'You'll need to establish where wiring might be required, where sockets and switches should sit, and which lights will be fixed versus those that can be moved around.' This is best done in conjunction with your furniture layout and before you choose your paint and decor, as the position, brightness and temperature of your bulbs can drastically change the appearance of colours and fabrics.

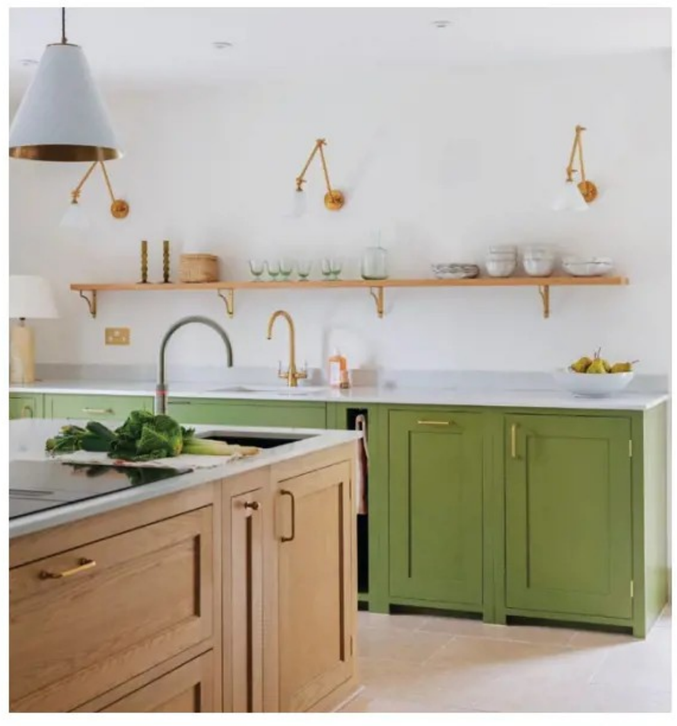
Establishing your lighting scheme early in the design process also enables you to add new lights and switches. 'The level of disruption caused by adding a new light point depends on access. Chasing new lights into walls or ceilings can be messy and costly, but it's much easier if you're retrofitting with good access or a loft above,' says Lee Lovett, co-founder of The Soho Lighting Company. 'Wall lights usually need shorter cable runs, while ceiling lights can be trickier without space overhead.' Doing this early in the renovation will save both time and money. An electrician will advise on the easiest methods and explain the levels of disruption.

It's also the perfect time to reconsider the position of switches and whether an additional set may prove to be useful. For example, a set of switches by your front door and another on the upstairs landing means you'll never have to navigate the hall or stairs in the dark.

LAYERING UP

Every lighting scheme should include task, accent and ambient lighting. Task lighting should offer practical illumination – such as a reading lamp beside the bed, pendants directly over the kitchen island or bulbs positioned above a bathroom mirror. Accent lighting provides atmosphere and highlights interesting features, details or architecture. Ambient lighting is the 'big light', the room's main source of illumination. 'Flush and semi-flush lights are designed for spaces with lower ceilings, though pendant lights and chandeliers can be considered for both large and small spaces,' says Peter Legg, new products development manager at Där. 'A helpful method to ensure the size will work is to draw the fixture's diameter on a piece of paper and attach it to a string to visualise how it will look in the space.'

LIGHT WORK
Left Kitchen task lighting benefits from higher lumens. Swan-neck Frieda wall light, Glow Lighting
Centre Solid shades are ideal for task lighting as they focus the beam, while glass shades maximise light throw for a more ambient feel. Kitchen by Neptune
Right Toggle switch and dimmer switch in antique brass, Corston



EMPLOYING CIRCUITS

'A lighting circuit is the electrical pathway that supplies power to your lights, allowing them to be switched on and off. Traditionally, all the lights in a room were on a single circuit, meaning they all came on together, which doesn't give you much flexibility,' says Jo Plant. 'By placing different types of lighting on separate circuits, you can create a range of moods. For example, wall lights might be on one circuit, ceiling lights on another, and accent or decorative lighting on a third, each controlled independently.' Rewiring to create different circuits needs to be done by a qualified electrician.

'There's no rule for switch order, but the most intuitive approach is left-to-right, starting with the light furthest from you and ending with the nearest. Matching the room's layout makes control feel natural and consistent,' adds Lee Lovett.

Flexibility can be provided by installing dimmer switches. This is more affordable and less disruptive than installing new circuits. It requires replacing the two-way switch with a dimmable design and your bulbs with dimmable ones.

TAKE CONTROL
Left Layer different styles of lighting, including wall, pendant and table lamps, for maximum flexibility and ambience, as seen in this room designed by Laura Stephens
Right Two-toggle switches, like this solid brass design, Lam Lighting, give more control over illumination

'Splitting circuits gives you independent control, while dimmers let you fine-tune the brightness. Combined, they offer far greater flexibility, comfort and efficiency in any room,' says Lee.

As well as improving the ambience in a room, split circuits and dimmer switches can save energy, as not all the lights need to be on full power every time you're in the room.

BULB SELECTION

Bulbs are measured in watts, lumens and degrees kelvin. Watts refers to the energy used, lumens to the brightness of the bulb, and kelvin relates to the temperature. 'In the past, watts were used to establish how bright your light would be, but as the lighting industry becomes more energy-efficient, lumens provide a more accurate picture of how bright your light will be,' says Mara Miller, founder of Industville. If you're upgrading incandescent bulbs to LEDs, 'for a like-for-like replacement, a standard 100W incandescent bulb will provide around 1600 lumens.'

The number of lumens a room requires is measured in 'foot candles', which equates to ➛

LIGHT THE WAY
Above Pooky's Clover Flush ceiling light is paired with its Rose wall fitting in antiqued bronze, and 14cm tapered shade in Jade Taj silk. **Opposite** Positioning lighting based on function rather than tradition will ensure a harmonious scheme, as seen in this space designed by Hutley & Humm

lumens per square foot. The requirements of a room differ depending on its size and what you plan to use it for. 'As a general guide, sitting rooms and bedrooms usually need around 10–20 lumens per square foot, while kitchens and bathrooms require much brighter lighting, at around 70–80 lumens per square foot,' says Jo Plant. For more specific guidance, Alcon Lighting has a calculator that takes into account the room's size and use, as well as the wall colour and desired light levels. The lumen requirements of an individual bulb also vary depending on its placement and purpose; for example, task lighting needs more lumens than ambient bulbs. For wall lights, each bulb should have the same lumens to ensure consistency.

Temperature is as important as brightness, influencing atmosphere and mood. 'Slightly confusingly, the lower the kelvin number, the warmer the light. Candlelight sits at around 2,000K, while daylight is closer to 6,000K,' says Jo. Cosy spaces, such as bedrooms or living rooms, need bulbs with lower kelvin – 2,000 to 3,000K is ideal. Bluer lights are more energising and are ideal for kitchens, bathrooms or home offices. For multifunctional spaces, such as home offices that double as guest bedrooms , consider purchasing a smart bulb whose temperature (and often colour) can be adjusted via an app.

'A considered lighting plan always begins with how you live in the room, not with the fittings themselves'

DAVID LAM, FOUNDER, LAM LIGHTING

SHORTCUTS

Smart bulbs and rechargeable lighting systems make it possible to gain greater flexibility with no disruption. For example, smart bulbs in the Philips Hue range can produce up to 806 lumens each, are dimmable to 2 per cent brightness, and their temperature can be set anywhere from 2,200–6,500K. Controlled via app or voice, they can be set on a schedule – perhaps to get brighter and cooler as the day progresses to energise you, or dimmer and warmer as you wind down for bed.

Rechargeable lights or bulbs let you easily add lights anywhere in the room without disruption or installation costs. However, they typically offer four to 10 hours' illumination per charge and have a higher up-front cost than traditional wired units.

MONEY MATTERS

'There's no one-size-fits-all price for installation,' says Paul Collins, technical director at National Inspection Council for Electrical Installation Contracting (NICEIC). 'Costs can vary widely depending on your property, the type of light fitting and the complexity of the work. The safest way to understand what's involved is to call a professional. They can assess your home, give you tailored advice and a quote for the work, and then carry out the installation to the required standards. Attempting these kinds of jobs without professional input can lead to unexpected costs and serious safety risks.' Look for an NICEIC-registered electrician to ensure the work is done correctly and provide an electrical certificate to guarantee the work.

SOURCEBOOK

NICEIC niceic.com
POOKY pooky.com
SOHO LIGHTING soholighting.com

FEATURE HOLLY REANEY **PHOTOGRAPHS** NEPTUNE AND PENICUIK ESTATE, BOZ GAGOVSKI/DESIGN HUTLEY & HUMM, WILL SLATER/DESIGN LAURA STEPHENS

PALMS

FRESH PERSPECTIVE

Bursting with character and charm, Jojo Humes' stylish country house is a testament to her vision, hard work and creativity

LIVING ROOM The downstairs had been stripped of original features in the 1980s, so Jojo added a new chimney breast and fitted a woodburner to create a focal point. Antique **chairs** in Ikat Bukhara fabric, GP&J Baker. **Mirror**, William Yeoward

In the heart of Suffolk, surrounded by miles of green fields, is the characterful village of Debenham where Jojo Humes, founder of Sojojo Interior Design Studio, now lives with her teenage son, Teddy. 'In 2019 we were living in the market town of Woodbridge, where I grew up,' says Jojo, 'but as my eldest children had flown the nest and there had been a change in my marital status, it was time to embrace new surroundings.' Jojo focused her search on Debenham for its outstanding high school, and it was there she stumbled across her dream house, with wisteria growing over the porch and red brick façade.

The four-bedroom property had started life as the village reading rooms in the 1800s before becoming a social club in the 1960s, then being turned into a residential property a decade later. 'It had been 'modernised' back in the 1980s, which meant all the character had been stripped away, and rooms divided in strange ways,' says Jojo. 'The house needed reconfiguring and a complete renovation.' Having previously renovated two houses, 'I am used to living in dust and chaos and this renovation was no exception,' Jojo says. An ugly lean-to was the first thing to go, then the electrics and plumbing were replaced. Jojo split the work into manageable sections over the following three years, focusing on one room at a time when money and time allowed. 'I waited over two years for the DeVol kitchen I wanted, as I wasn't prepared to compromise on the quality just for a quick fix,' she says. Spare bedrooms were rented out to lodgers to help finance the project and with her honed DIY skills, Jojo was able to work through her endless list of jobs in the evenings and at weekends.

'In March 2020, as the country prepared to go into lockdown, I secured the first of three skips! I knew with time on my hands, I could get a lot done and started by knocking out the built-in cupboards in the master bedroom.' The central stairwell was dark with no natural light and Jojo wanted to create a grand landing by borrowing space from both front bedrooms and revealing an original window. 'The minute we could have tradespeople back into our homes, new walls were built, and a beautiful bespoke handrail, banister and galleried section fitted.' Downstairs, the wall was knocked through from the living area into the kitchen to give the rooms an open-plan feel, with fitted glazed double doors which allowed the flow of light throughout the space.

As a designer, Jojo's passions are colour, texture and pattern. 'I wanted to give each room a strong identity but not steer too far from traditional Victorian colours,' she says. Each room is rich and vibrant, from the bright mustard yellow in the hallway, the blues in the master bedroom to the soft-pink walls in the kitchen. Jojo's skilfully curated mix of antique furniture, vintage fabrics, artwork and bold patterned wallpaper creates interest and comfort in equal measure. 'What has emerged surpasses anything I could have imagined,' she smiles. 'I love the energy in the house and feel so blessed to have had the opportunity to inject new life into this beautiful building and make it my own.'

AT HOME WITH

OWNER Interior designer Jojo Humes (sojojo.co.uk) lives here with her son Teddy, and their Welsh terrier, Hector, with regular visits from her older children, Beth, Nims, and Cam.

HOUSE A Victorian reading room, built in 1850 in Debenham, Suffolk, and converted into a four-bedroom home in the 1970s.

DINING ROOM This cosy space comfortably seats ten people around the bespoke table. Reclaimed wood **dining table**, The Barn.co. Antique garden **chairs**, Snape Antiques Centre. **Rug**,The Rug Company

KITCHEN Knocking through into the kitchen and adding glazed double doors has given the downstairs space a better flow, with all the rooms connected through the circular layout. **Island**, found on Ebay and painted in Drummond, Little Greene. **Ceiling light**, Melton Antiques

'I absolutely love my kitchen. I waited two years so I could get what I wanted, planning and budgeting for it meticulously'

KITCHEN Jojo now has her dream country kitchen with smart wooden Shaker-style cabinets and an electric range cooker. **Cabinetry** in Printer's Black, DeVol. Bianco Antico granite **worktop**, Mainstream Granite. **Range cooker**, Everhot. **Walls** painted in Setting Plaster, Farrow & Ball

STUDY Jojo previously had a studio and retail space elsewhere, but now enjoys the freedom of working from home in her moody and grown-up home office. Try Stockholm **rug**, Ikea

MAIN BEDROOM
Rich-blue walls create an indulgent but relaxing feel in the master bedroom. **Walls** in De Nimes, Farrow & Ball. **Rug** and kantha **bedspread**, both Ebay finds

BATHROOM The same blue from the bedroom continues on the bath panelling, adding a sense of harmony to the home. Tassi **wallpaper**, Colefax and Fowler. Try Haines Collection for similar vintage **fabric**

JOJO'S COUNTRY LIFE

VISIT 'We love Helmingham Hall Gardens near Stowmarket (helmingham.com) which surround a 15th-century moated house.'

SHOP AT 'Swan House & Garden (swanhouseandgarden.co.uk) in Debenham is a treasure trove of unique textiles, antique curios and bespoke furniture curated from all over the world.'

EAT AT 'The Ufford Crown (theuffordcrown.com), a friendly village pub and restaurant with a fabulous sun terrace – the perfect place to relax.'

TEDDY'S BEDROOM Teddy had his heart set on a red room, and the split between red and white at picture-rail height is a subtle nod to the house's history. **Walls** in Indian Lake, Mylands. Vintage **desk** and **chair**, Ebay

FEATURE JULIET BENNING
PHOTOGRAPHS BRENT DARBY

GUEST BEDROOM With its dark-painted walls and white-washed floors, this is a relaxing and calm space for visiting friends and family. **Walls** in Basalt, Little Greene. **Bed**, Mansion House Bedding Company. Vintage **suitcases**, Ebay

ADD MORE CHARACTER

Want to bring personality to a renovation or contemporary home? Emma Sims Hilditch reveals how to get a lived-in look that oozes charm

At my design firm Sims Hilditch, we believe that any home can feel warm and lived-in, regardless of age or heritage. While Georgian vicarages and cosy cottages may already be steeped in character and filled with period details, there's no reason a new-build property or a contemporary addition to a period home can't be imbued with the same warm and cosy atmosphere. Through soft furnishings, bespoke joinery and carefully curated colour palettes, a new property or extension can feel just as inviting as a heritage home.

FOCUS ON NATURAL MATERIALS FOR FLOORS

Without dedicated attention, a new-build or contemporary addition can feel cold and unfriendly; ultimately lacking the warmth of an older building. The ambience of a room comes from many factors, but I always start to add interest through the hard finishes. Stone or timber flooring is a wonderful way to transform a blank space.

BRING WARMTH AND CHARACTER TO WALLS

One of the simplest ways of transforming a new space is to incorporate rough timber planking into the design; you can source salvaged boarding through reclamation yards. Used on walls and ceilings, it's an inexpensive and highly effective way of creating character.

For a more polished look, you could put wooden panelling on the walls, whether that's a classic, country-style tongue-and-groove design or a period look with battens. To take this look even further, paint it a deep shade to bring depth to your scheme. Finally, a beautiful wallpaper will immediately conjure character and warmth.

PINPOINT YOUR PERSONAL STYLE

'One of the pleasures of having a blank canvas to decorate is that it's an opportunity to refine and reconsider your style, and consider what comfort and character means to you. Many of our city-living clients specifically ask that their home reflects a country look, whether it's a farmhouse kitchen or cosy lounge complete with wood burner. It's entirely up to you to decide on your chosen aesthetic and how you want to layer it into your property.

CREATE FLOW WITH FURNISHINGS

Once construction of the new house or extension is completed, our designers focus on high-quality furnishings that will immediately inject the space with soul. Whether it's antiques or characterful contemporary furniture, each piece is carefully considered to help create a natural flow throughout the entire home.

Look for one-off pieces at antiques fairs and markets or repurpose existing furniture from another room and bring its personal history into your new space. Alternatively, ask a joiner for a made-to-measure piece designed to fit an alcove or nook, so it instantly takes on a timeless quality. And if it's an extension or addition that you're decorating, see if you can link the new and original spaces by repeating shapes, colours or furnishings, so your whole home oozes character.

BLEND OLD WITH NEW
Emma suggests using salvaged wood boards on walls and ceilings to soften a new extension

FEATURE ANDRÉA CHILDS

'Look for one-off pieces at antiques fairs or repurpose existing furniture from another room and bring its personal history to your newly decorated space'

BACK TO OUR ROOTS

A slower pace of life and space for a family were the impetus for Jess Daines and her husband Ted when they returned to rural Norfolk to set up home

LIVING ROOM Rich red tones, burnt orange and myriad patterns create a relaxing vibe. **Walls** in Silent White, Little Greene. **Fender,** Oka. Rust-coloured **sofa**, Furniture Village. Patterned **sofa**, Love Your Home

London will always have a magnetism about it, particularly for those from rural areas keen to experience the opportunities and vibrancy of living and working in a capital city. But sometimes the resurgent allure of green fields, fresh air and a real sense of space is too much to ignore. Jess Daines and her husband Ted both grew up in the oh-so-rural Norfolk countryside, surrounded by farmland, sweeping rural vistas and, importantly, houses of a decent size. 'Norfolk has a funny way of calling you home,' smiles Jess as she describes their former life in London, remembering quite how compact their flat there was. 'We lived in a very small studio apartment, which was cosy, to say the least!'

With plans to start a family, the pair packed up their belongings and ventured back to East Anglia. 'We were searching on Rightmove for around a year until we found the right house for us,' she says of the characterful property, situated in a picturesque village just north of Norwich and surrounded by acres of open fields. 'It really did tick all the right boxes for us as a family. Now we have a lovely-sized garden and we're able to walk our dog, Cooper, by the neighbouring fields where we love to watch the harvest in the summer. It feels like a very special place to raise a family, and our village pub has also reopened, which is wonderful!'

The property had previously been rented out but the couple could see how it could be re-energised and enhanced to create a welcoming family home. 'We particularly loved the oak windows, deep skirting boards and oak floorboards downstairs. It just had a lovely warmth about it,' Jess says. The exterior, too, exuded all the rustic charm they were after, with its tiny gabled windows, red brick façade and terracotta tiles on the roof.

Once inside, they set to making some changes. 'Initially, it was all cosmetic work. Then, more recently, we decided to add a small extension, creating a dining space off the kitchen, which joined on to the living room,' she says, adding that while the work was reasonably minimal, the arrival of baby Theo made it more of a juggle. 'It was a relatively small project but it was definitely enough for me to manage with a small baby!'

Bifold doors now lead out onto the garden, with countryside vistas beyond. 'The amount of natural light we now get has been a game-changer for these north-facing rooms,' Jess says. 'And the open-plan layout feels nice and cosy due to the warm colour palette and natural materials.' Pine furniture, stone floors and textural sisal all complement each other perfectly.

It's clear that Jess has a keen eye for detail and love of interior design, something her 190,000 Instagram followers confirm. Snapshots of her home eloquently depict her favourite colours and textures, as well as the romance of slow-living. Images of the cosy kitchen, for example, might include a basket of fallen apples in the autumn or a bunch of freshly cut summer flowers to communicate the ebb and flow of seasonal country life. But it is also apparent that Jess loves the vibrancy of richer shades to add energy and interest to a space. The kitchen island in a spicy red tone is a good example, as are the gingery hues of the velvet sofa in the living room, enlivened further with cushions and throws in elaborate patterns. It is all effortlessly brought together, something Jess attributes to the organic process of homemaking. 'I would say it's taken me a little while to develop my style but I love discovering new colour combinations, and I've started to become more confident with styling different patterns together,' she adds. 'I do think the best homes take time and it's about adding the different layers, personal touches and collecting pieces along the way that mean something.'

Instagram @mrsjessdaines

AT HOME WITH

OWNERS Jess Daines, content creator, lives here with husband Ted, an engineer, and son Theo.

HOUSE A terraced house built around 2000, comprising living room, snug, kitchen, dining room, three bedrooms (one en suite) and family bathroom.

'An extension that brings in lots of natural light has been a game-changer for these north-facing rooms. Warm colours and natural materials add to the cosy feel'

LIVING ROOM A white and grey patterned sofa introduces a fresh feel to the living room, and is the perfect visual balance to the rich red tones. **Cushions,** Oka and Pottery Barn. Table **lamp** and ikat **shade**, Oka

EXTERIOR While the house was built around the turn of the millennium, it has a traditional appearance. Gable dormer windows, terracotta roof tiles and a brick structure give the exterior plenty of rustic charm

KITCHEN The kitchen oozes country style with Shaker panelled cupboards, peg rail shelving and a pine dresser. **Walls** in Jitney; **cabinets** in School House White, both Farrow & Ball. **Island** in Paprika, Neptune

KITCHEN Jess loves to visit vintage shops and displays some of her favourite finds on the antique pine kitchen dresser. For similar **dresser**, try Vinterior. Try Great British Vintage Market for similar **collectibles**

JESS'S COUNTRY LIFE

SIMPLE PLEASURES 'Watching the change of seasons from our window and having that uninterrupted view of greenery and countryside. We also have the pleasure of sheep in our neighbouring field sometimes.'

VISIT 'I love Whitlingham Country Park for a stroll around the broad with Theo. It's so relaxing and you can grab a tasty hot drink from the Flint Barn Cafe (whitlinghamcountrypark.com). We also love Wells-next-the-Sea for a good stomp along the shore.'

SHOP AT 'For homewares, my favourite thing is a rummage around second-hand shops and antiques centres – you never know what you'll find. Holt Antiques & Interiors Centre is really good (holtantiquesandinteriors.co.uk).'

DINING AREA Natural wood furniture creates a relaxed atmosphere. A sideboard with carved bobble detail provides valuable storage. Limestone floor **tiles,** Quorn Stone. Dining **table** and **chairs**, Cotswold Company

EN SUITE A floor of clay tiles in a herringbone configuration is both beautiful and practical. Brass fixtures and green metro tiles add to the charm. Clay **tiles** and metro **tiles**, both Ca Pietra. **Sanitaryware**, Burlington

MAIN BEDROOM Jess has opted for a combination of floral wallpaper and tongue-and-groove panelling in a solid red shade. **Walls** in Brooke House wallpaper in Cloth; **panelling** in Tuscan Red, both Little Greene

MAIN BEDROOM Tucked under the eaves, this space is full of character with a sloping ceiling and tiny gabled window. A striped cushion adds a dash of formality to the décor. **Bed**, bespoke from NaturalMat

FEATURE SARA EMSLIE
PHOTOGRAPHS RACHAEL SMITH

GUEST ROOM This welcoming room has a layered, textural feel with rattan headboard, frilly cushions and vintage shutters. **Walls** in Castle Stone, Lucie Annabel. **Bed**, Laura Ashley at Next. **Rug**, Livabliss

Dish of the day

Oven to table dining doesn't get more cosy than this. Set the dish on the table and let everyone dig in...

KALE AND SPROUT SPANAKOPITA

COQ AU CHAMPAGNE

Kale and sprout spanakopita

SERVES 6-8

This classic Greek dish gets a seasonal twist, with kale and sprouts swapped in for the usual spinach.

500g (1lb) Brussels sprouts, peeled and trimmed

180g (6¼oz) kale

200g (7oz) block of feta, patted dry and crumbled

3tbsp toasted pine nuts

1 leek, finely sliced

25g (1oz) parsley, finely chopped

1tbsp chopped dill

Zest of 1 unwaxed lemon

250g (8¾oz) pack filo pastry

75ml (2½fl oz) olive oil

1 Bring a large pan of salted water to the boil. Add the sprouts. After 5 minutes add the kale and cook for 3 minutes more. Pour into a colander and shake off as much water as possible. Return to the empty pan and warm to dry.

2 Put the feta, pine nuts, leek, chopped herbs, and lemon zest in a large bowl with ½tsp salt.

3 Finely chop or briefly pulse the sprouts and kale in a food processor. Mix into the ingredients in the bowl.

4 Line the base of the dish with baking parchment. Layer in half the filo, using a spoon to drizzle or brushing each sheet with oil before adding the next. Alternate the layers so the pastry covers the sides of the dish. Add the filling and press down firmly with the back of a spoon.

5 Continue layering the filo and oil until all the sheets are used up and brush the top layer with the remaining oil. If preparing ahead, wrap the spanakopita in clingfilm and freeze for up to three months. Defrost in the fridge before continuing to step 6 & 7.

6 Preheat the oven to 200°C / 400°F / Gas Mark 6. Cook for 40 minutes until golden. Keep an eye on the pastry; if it's getting too dark, cover with foil.

7 Cool for 5 minutes before cutting into quarters and then cutting each in half diagonally to create 8 triangles.

Coq au Champagne

SERVES 4

A fabulous celebratory twist on the classic chicken dish – although any sparkling wine will work.

2tbsp olive oil

4 chicken breasts, skin on

2 sticks celery, finely chopped

300g (10½oz) pearl shallots, peeled

2 carrots, roughly chopped

350g (12¼oz) small chestnut mushrooms or larger ones, quartered

2 sprigs thyme

350ml (11¾fl oz) Champagne

125ml (4¼fl oz) chicken stock

Few sprigs tarragon leaves, chopped

3tbsp crème fraîche

Lemon wedges, to serve

1 Heat half the oil in a large, lidded frying pan and fry the chicken skin side down. Season the top of the chicken and leave it to cook until the skin is crisp and golden. Turn it over, season the skin and cook for a further 5 minutes. Remove the chicken from the pan and set aside.

2 Add the remaining oil to the pan along with the celery, shallots and carrots. Cook on a low heat for 8-10 minutes, until the vegetables are soft. Turn the heat up a little, add the mushrooms and the thyme, and cook for a further 5-10 minutes, until the mushrooms start to brown.

3 Pour in the champagne and allow the alcohol to cook off for a few minutes before adding the stock. Bring to a rolling simmer, nestle the chicken breasts back into the pan and cook with the lid on for 10 minutes. Remove the lid for a final 10 minutes, adding 1tbsp of water if it gets too thick. Remove from the heat.

4 Stir through the tarragon leaves and crème fraîche. Serve with boiled potatoes or rice, and fresh greens. →

SHEPHERD'S PIE WITH ROOT VEG MASH

Shepherd's pie with root veg mash

SERVES 6

We've given the ultimate comfort food go-to a delicious upgrade with rich flavours and a colourful root veg mash.

500g (1lb) lean lamb mince

1 large onion, grated

2 carrots, grated

1 celery stick, finely diced

250g (8¾oz) mixed mushrooms, finely chopped

1 sprig fresh rosemary, finely chopped

2 sprigs fresh thyme, leaves picked

1tbsp plain flour

200ml (6¾fl oz) red wine

2tsp wholegrain mustard

1tbsp Worcestershire sauce

500ml (1 pint) beef stock

1 bay leaf

250g (8¾oz) pouch cooked Puy lentils

FOR THE MASH

450g (1lb) each of: celeriac, carrots and potatoes, peeled and diced

50ml (1¾fl oz) whole milk

Knob of butter

25g (1oz) Parmesan, grated

1 Add the lamb to a lidded casserole and place over a high heat. Cook for 12-15 minutes until the fat has rendered and the lamb is browned. Add in the vegetables and herbs (reserving some thyme), and sweat for 12-15 minutes.

2 Stir in the flour and add the red wine. Cook out for a few minutes before adding the mustard, Worcestershire sauce and stock. Stir, then add the bay leaf and lentils. Reduce the heat to medium and cook with the lid on for 25 minutes, stirring occasionally.

3 Meanwhile, for the mash, add the celeriac and carrots to a pan and fill with water. Season with salt and bring to a boil. Simmer for 15 minutes, then add in the potatoes and cook for a further 10 minutes, or until tender. Drain into a colander then cover with a clean tea towel and allow to steam for 10 minutes.

4 Heat the oven to 190°C / 375°F / Gas Mark 5. Transfer the vegetables back to the pan and mash with the milk and butter. Season to taste.

5 Remove the bay leaf from the mince then top with spoonfuls of the mash. Sprinkle over the Parmesan and lightly fork through the mash, creating peaks that will catch and go crispy when baking.

6 Bake for 30-35 minutes, until golden and bubbling at the edges. Scatter with fresh thyme and serve with seasonal greens.

Vegan mac 'n' cheese with leeks

SERVES 6

Gooey and comforting, this plant-based pasta bake is the perfect standby for unexpected guests.

400g (14oz) prepared butternut squash

3 garlic cloves, skins on

2tbsp olive oil

2 large leeks, trimmed and sliced into rounds

100g (3½oz) cashew nuts

250ml (8½fl oz) plant-based milk

2tsp mustard powder

½tsp paprika

400g (14oz) macaroni pasta

50g (1¾oz) breadcrumbs

Few sprigs thyme, leaves stripped

1 Heat the oven to 180°C / 350°F / Gas Mark 4. Drizzle the squash and garlic with 1tbsp oil and roast for 30 minutes until tender. After 10 minutes, add the leeks.

2 Meanwhile, place the cashew nuts in a bowl with the plant milk, mustard powder and paprika. Cook the pasta to al dente (around 8 minutes) in boiling water.

3 Carefully squeeze the soft, roasted garlic out of its skins into a blender with the squash, cashews and plant milk mix, then blend together.

4 Drain the pasta and reserve 50ml (1¾fl oz) pasta water. Mix the pureed squash with the reserved pasta water and then stir into the pasta with the leeks.

5 Sprinkle over the breadcrumbs and thyme leaves then drizzle with the remaining oil. Place back in the oven and cook for 10-15 minutes until piping hot and the breadcrumbs are turning golden. →

VEGAN MAC 'N' CHEESE WITH LEEKS

Curried parsnip soup

SERVES 4

Naan croutons make this tasty soup something extra special. For a vegan version, omit the cream and croutons.

2tsp olive oil

1 onion, chopped

1 garlic clove, crushed

1tbsp garam masala

½tsp turmeric

¼tsp mustard powder

¼tsp ground cinnamon

Pinch cayenne pepper, plus extra to serve (optional)

1 naan bread

500g (1lb) parsnips, peeled and chopped

1 large potato, peeled and chopped

1ltr (2 pints) vegetable stock

¼tsp nigella seeds (optional)

70ml (2¼fl oz) double cream, plus extra to serve (optional)

Coriander leaves, to serve (optional)

1 Heat half the oil in a saucepan and add the onion. Cook over medium heat until soft and translucent. Add the garlic and spices and cook for 1 minute, then add the parsnips, potato and stock. Simmer for 20-30 minutes until soft.

2 Heat the oven to 180°C / 350°F / Gas Mark 4. Cut the naan into cubes and toss with remaining 1tsp of oil and the nigella seeds. Scatter in a single layer over a baking tray and cook for 10-15 minutes. These are your croutons.

3 When the vegetables are tender, use a stick blender to puree the soup until smooth. Stir in the cream then serve with an extra sprinkling of cayenne, the coriander and naan croutons.

4 If making ahead, freeze for up to 3 months (or it will keep in the fridge for a couple of days), defrost completely and reheat on the hob. If freezing the croutons, defrost them completely. Place in a hot oven for 5 minutes with a little more oil to re-crisp.

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COSY COUNTRY

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Printed in the UK

Distributed by Marketforce – www.marketforce.co.uk
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Country Homes & Interiors Cosy Country First Edition (HOB7200)
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YOUR GUIDE TO WARM & HOMELY LIVING

DECORATING

ADD MORE CHARACTER

Want to bring personality to a renovation or contemporary home? Emma Sims Hilditch reveals how to get a lived in look that oozes charm

'Look for one-off pieces at antiques fairs or repurpose existing furniture from another room and bring its personal history to your newly decorated space'

NORFOLK HOUSE

BACK TO OUR ROOTS

A slower pace of life and space for a family were the impetus for Jess Daines and her husband Ted when they returned to rural Norfolk to set up home

ADVICE

Interior experts share their tips for making your home more welcoming

HOMES

Take a tour of these spectacular houses that embrace cosiness in every room

HOMEMAKING

IT'S TIME TO LIGHT THE FIRE

Clean your chimney, order your logs and settle down for cosy evenings by the fireside this autumn with these hearth-warming tips

'Seasoned hardwoods such as ash, oak, beech and birch will burn the cleanest and longest with a bright flame. Avoid soft woods such as pine and fir, which produce more smoke'

DECORATING

Blush, terracotta and pink-toned neutrals infuse a room with gentle warmth. Choose ribbed accessories and furniture for a grounded feel and add a glow with candles

QUIET COMFORT

Retreat from overwhelm with soothing colours, grounding textures and the cosseting softness of blankets, fleeces and cushions

HIBERNATE

Make the most of the colder evenings and hunker down beside the comforting glow of a fire

STYLING

How soothing hues and layered textures can help you create a serene sanctuary

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