

COUNTRY HOME

POSITIVE *thinking*

With seven children and two growing businesses to look after, rebuilding this Victorian house in Wiltshire was a challenge its owners took in their stride

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SITTING ROOM

The rug Stephanie inherited from her parents was used as colour inspiration for the velvet cushions on the sofas. Sofas in Mystic in Natural, £90m, Mark Alexander, 01623 750005, markalexander.com. Cushions, from £45 each, Inky Velvet, 0800 028 5559, inkyvelvet.com. Lerat Leaf

lamp base in Burnt Silver, £858 without shade, Porta Romana, 020 7352 0440, portaromana.com.

ENTRANCE HALL

“The fireplace (right) is lit almost every weekend during the winter; it’s such a welcoming sight,” says Stephanie.

For similar artworks by Shirin Tabeshfar, try Josie Eastwood Fine Art, 01962 776677, josieeastwood.com.

FRONT DOOR

The original façade (below right) has been repointed, and given new windows and a Georgian-inspired front porch to complete the look.





SITTING ROOM

To keep the view through to the study open, two armchairs (this picture) complete the fireside seating arrangement, where an antique gilded Japanese screen (right) adds luminous warmth. Smoked Oak Henley Jutland flooring, from £59.94sq m, Havwoods, 01524 737000, havwoods.co.uk. For a similar Japanese screen, try Altfield, altfield.com.



HOME CINEMA ROOM

"I love to make displays of family photographs," says Stephanie of the staggered arrangement in this room (right), "but woe betide me if anyone is ever left out." Walls in Mole's Breath, Estate Emulsion, £38 for 2.5 litres, Farrow & Ball, 01202 876141, farrow-ball.com. Tom wall light, from £258, Hector Finch, 020 7731 8886, hectorfinch.com. Interior design, Stephanie Dunning Interior Design, 01722 710608, stephanie.dunninginteriordesign.com.





“This is the first time in a while that the house hasn’t been filled with children,” says interior designer Stephanie Dunning as she shows us around the home that she and her husband, Peter Everard, have recently renovated in Wiltshire. The remark carries greater meaning when you discover that Stephanie and Peter have four boys and three girls and, while none of the children lives in the house full-time these days, “they’re always coming home”, Peter says.

“Last Christmas was a pretty riotous affair, with all their partners and friends,” Stephanie admits, but a few minutes’ conversation makes it clear that this, and the constant toing and froing that is so often a feature of family life, is precisely the way the couple likes things to be. In fact, for the past ten years, Stephanie has not only raised her family, she has run a highly successful interior design business while renovating this Victorian lodge, a project that was not without its challenges.

The couple bought the property after completing the renovation and extension of their previous home in nearby Dorset. The handsome façade instantly appealed to them, as did the two acres of land, including a pretty walled vegetable garden and a barn, which Stephanie knew would make the perfect office. The most important aspect, however, was the location. “It’s set in a gorgeous position, in a conservation area between two large country estates,” Stephanie says. “There are no other houses nearby, so it feels as if we’re in the deepest, darkest countryside, but we have easy access to London and it’s only a seven-minute drive to the centre of Salisbury.”

Other aspects of the property were less appealing, however. Behind the 1890s façade was a pair of cramped cottages set at right angles, not the large country home that the growing family required. Determined to make it work, they all squeezed into the existing rooms and lived there while they considered the options. A survey revealed that the cottages were structurally unsound and not fit to be saved. “That’s not what we were expecting,” Stephanie recalls, in an impressively understated way, given that the discovery meant the couple would have to erect an entirely new house behind the façade, instead of simply enlarging the original building’s L-shaped footprint.

Adapting their plans to fit the new situation, the couple’s first idea was to build a house that included an extension on either side, but their planning application was refused. Six years and various proposals later, they received the go-ahead for a design that filled in the L-shape. “Although it wasn’t the configuration we thought we wanted,” says Stephanie, “we are tremendously pleased with the result. We’ve gained the extra space we needed, as well as lots of natural light, and we’ve changed the aspect of the house so that it faces the garden.”

Today, the capacious interior matches the grand façade. Upstairs there are six bedrooms and four bathrooms, while downstairs comprises a kitchen with a conservatory dining room, a sitting room and study with

DINING AREA

A dramatic pendant light (above left), which echoes the shape of the roof, makes the dining table the focal point, while its glass design ensures it does not detract from the airy feel created by windows on three sides. Diner 125 pendant light in weathered brass, £790.80, Davey Lighting at Original BTC, 01993 882251, originalbtc.com. Chippendale chairs, £377 each,

Homes in Heaven, 020 7736 2227, homesinheaven.com.

BOOT ROOM

Built-in shelving (left), designed by Peter, keeps the collection of outdoor shoes in good order as well as providing plenty of additional storage. Bespoke joinery, The English Joinery Company, 01722 711401, theenglishjoinerycompany.com.



KITCHEN

Dark cabinetry throws the white island, with its elegant arabescato marble worktop, into sharp relief. Enamel pendant light in Grey, £120, Fritz Fryer, 01989 567416, fritzfryer.co.uk. Orson bar stool in mango wood and steel, £89, Swoon Editions, 020 3137 2464, swooneditions.com.



MAIN BEDROOM

Sisal flooring adds a rustic note to this otherwise genteel scheme, its rugged looks emphasising the soft textures and hues of the bed. **Headboard** in Spirit in Silverbirch, £72m, Mark Alexander, 01623 750005, markalexander.com. **Sisal Bubbleweave** in Honey, £51.98m sq, Alternative Flooring, 01264 335111, alternativeflooring.com.

a second conservatory-dining room, a television room and a cinema room, “which the children use all the time”.

“Some people like small rooms that can be shut off,” says Stephanie, “but we’re such a big family, it was important to have large rooms that flow into one another so we can all come together easily and comfortably.” The layout of the house is beautifully considered and enhanced by clever design solutions such as positioning the study off the sitting room. “You have to walk through the sitting room to reach the study, which encourages us to use both spaces.”

Stephanie rejects the notion that a six-year delay in starting work on their new home might have left her feeling jaded when it came to the interior design: “Oh no, that’s not me at all,” she says. “I am always full of energy.” Stephanie does, however, admit that making decisions for her own home rather than a client’s was tricky. “Knowing how much choice there is made it hard for me to commit to single items. I needed a lot of input from my assistant, and Peter, who owns and runs The English Joinery Company, was absolutely invaluable as the project manager. It ended up being a very collaborative experience.”

There were some elements of the house that Stephanie did have very clear ideas on. “I knew what I wanted in the entrance hall: panelling, a stone floor in a shade sympathetic to children, dogs and country living, and a very specific shade of pale grey for the walls. The latter was impossible to find ready-made, so I ended up having it mixed specially.”

Stephanie also had a definite vision for the kitchen. “I wanted a big kitchen table rather than a formal dining room that would only be used on high days and holidays,” she says. Other essentials included an island set with stools so that cooking would be a sociable activity, and a larder so that all her ingredients would be in one place.

In those areas, and throughout the house, the decoration reflects Stephanie’s signature style. “I design for individuals, but I suppose I do have a certain look,” she says. “I’m inspired by Georgian interiors, especially the muted, elegant colours. I don’t use a lot of pattern, but I love texture and big, simple lights. I enjoy the odd piece of vintage furniture, particularly from the Thirties and Fifties, and items with sentimental value, such as the wing chair in the hall, which I bought for Peter when we got married. I’m a big believer in repainting and reupholstering. I don’t think it’s something to be nervous about.”

Stephanie is also a fan of the type of “solid, clean joinery” for which her husband’s company is well known. Its expertly crafted work is evident throughout the house, from the extensive use of panelling to the extra thick doors that close with what Stephanie describes as a “pleasing clunk”.

The result is a fine and stylish house that oozes comfort and a welcoming air. With roaring log fires in every room, plump sofas, a full fridge and even a television to watch while doing the ironing in the laundry room, it is no surprise that the children find it hard to fly the nest.

MAIN BATHROOM

A chair upholstered in chocolate mohair (above right) brings a warmer element to the pale shades of the bathroom. **Elegant bespoke furniture** is also a feature of this scheme with a large tailor-made mirror (right) enhancing the light levels.

Library wall light in brushed nickel, £528 without shade, Porta Romana, 020 7352 0440, portaromana.com. **The Falmouth cast iron bath**, £645, The Cast Iron Bath Company, 01723 585896, castironbath.co.uk. **Blinds** in Placid Stripe in Silver Birch, £120, Mark Alexander, 01623 750005, markalexander.com.





LANDING

An intricate foliage-design chandelier brings decorative appeal to the linear look of this galleried landing (above left) at the centre of the house.

Borghese ceiling light. from £2,490, Beaumont & Fletcher, 020 7352 5594, beaumontandfletcher.com. **For similar artwork by Judy Buxton,** try Josie Eastwood Fine Art, 01962 776677, josieeastwood.com.

TOM'S BEDROOM

Blue-grey built-in cupboards (above) are the perfect foil for the beautiful tone of the mahogany chest of drawers.

Cupboards in Btwn Dog & Wolf, Water Based Eggshell, £55 for 2.5 litres, Paint & Paper Library, 020 7823 7755, paint-library.co.uk.

GEORGE'S BEDROOM

Stephanie expertly matched the lamp and cushions (left) for a colourful accent.

Sophie cushion in Amethyst, £63, Inky Velvet, 0800 028 5559, inkyvelvet.com.

HARRY'S BEDROOM

Antique fencing masks are a quirky way to echo the finishes in the bedroom (opposite).