

# 25 BEAUTIFUL HOMES

## CREATING SPACE

*Renovation projects to inspire*

Beautiful  
houses in the  
city, coast  
and country

**ROOM ENVY**  
A Spanish hacienda  
with a dream scheme

## THE NEW NEUTRALS

GORGEOUS ROOMS IN SHADES  
OF WHITE, GREY AND STONE





# DATE WITH DESTINY

After a thoughtful and loving restoration, Sophie and Tom Hughes now have the family home they always dreamed of

FEATURE MARISHA TAYLOR | PHOTOGRAPHY JAMES FRENCH

**W**hen Tom Hughes, a mechanical engineer, was offered a job relocation to Berkshire, both he and his wife Sophie, a senior civil servant, jumped at the opportunity to find the period property they had always wanted for themselves and their daughters Ella, now 13, and Charlotte, 15. 'We had moved from our small but idyllic white cottage a few years before to a more modern house that made the commute easier,' says

Sophie. 'But we really missed the period charm of our former home.' And so they jumped at the chance to view this pretty Georgian property. 'Approaching it from the drive, I fell in love with this quintessentially English red-brick cottage,' says Sophie. 'It needed a lot of refurbishment and Tom needed a little persuasion, but the huge fireplaces and original beams gave it the feel of the family home we'd been looking for.'

The couple put an offer in straight away, which was accepted, but shortly afterwards

their buyer pulled out, scuppering their plans. 'Three months later, we found a new buyer and, as luck would have it, the cottage was back on the market. We put in another offer and this time it all went through. We were destined to live here.'

However, the building was in a worse state of repair than Sophie remembered. 'I certainly didn't recall the carpet up the side of the bath or the Aga plonked in the middle of the kitchen,' she smiles. 'The layout downstairs didn't flow; we wanted





INSPIRING

### HOME TRUTHS

**THE PROPERTY** Cottage, dating back to 1750  
**LOCATION** Berkshire  
**ROOMS** Drawing room, family room, kitchen-diner, snug, study, utility room, four bedrooms (one en suite), bathroom  
**PURCHASED** 2004  
**PREVIOUS PROPERTY** 'We lived in a modern home near Windsor, close to a station for commuting,' says Sophie.



**KITCHEN-DINER**  
 'This is where we spend time as a family, with the dog usually asleep by the Aga. We wanted a modern feel but one that complemented period features like the oak beams,' says Sophie. Artisan kitchen, price on request, John Lewis of Hungerford. Balmoral six-seater oak table, £2,515; Shoreditch chairs in Clara Natural, £260 each, all Neptune. The Large Braided rug is similar, £525, The White Company

**SNUG**  
 'The girls like to relax in this area, which is connected to the open-plan kitchen,' says Sophie. Try eBay for armchairs like these. Library wallpaper, £12 a roll, Albany Marcus at Wallpaper Direct. Lina side table, £95, Cox & Cox

**DRAWING ROOM**  
 The framed artwork of animals wearing clothes make Sophie laugh. 'Everyone should have something in their home that makes them smile,' she says. Hambleton corner sofa, £5,060, Sofas & Stuff. Poppy Field rug, £155, French Connection. Prints by Yago Partal, from £35, Zoo Portraits







**ELLA'S ROOM**  
**Starry wallpaper and twinkly fairy lights offset the beams.**  
 Cole and Son Whimsical Stars wallpaper, £80 a roll, Designer Wallpapers. Hemnes day bed, £410, Ikea

**HALL**  
**Rich blue walls and a smart runner make an inviting space.**  
 Walls painted in Btwn Dog and Wolf pure flat emulsion, £48.50 for 2.5L, Paint & Paper Library

**MAIN BEDROOM**  
**'We kept colours calm and added warmth with textiles and wallpaper,' says Sophie.**  
 The Jayne metal bed frame is comparable, £299, John Lewis & Partners. Timber White wallpaper, £78 a roll, Andrew Martin

**BATHROOM**  
**Towels hang on playful hooks.**  
 Try Valve wheel cast-iron hooks, £4.50 each, Love Hooks



a modern open-plan feel with defined spaces to ensure that all the rooms were used.'

The couple kept the Aga, moving it when the kitchen was refurbished to create a spacious open-plan kitchen-living area with a vaulted ceiling in place of the dilapidated white plastic conservatory. In the hall, they knocked down walls and installed a new oak staircase to make a more welcoming entrance. Moving a wall created a functional dining space which in turn gave them a larger snug off the kitchen. The couple also moved the fireplace to the

drawing room. 'This creates a lovely recessed focal point, while the new wood burner makes it really cosy,' says Sophie.

As the renovation had been quite time-consuming, and the couple were busy with work commitments, they decided to bring in an interior designer to help finish the house. 'Jo from Isla James Interiors was wonderful,' says Sophie. 'Her brief was to create a contemporary feel without jeopardising the rich character of the cottage. The colour scheme, furnishings and artwork were all influenced by our strong association

with nature and the surrounding garden and countryside, with inspiration from our home's historic elements. We wanted the design and colour palette to work in harmony with the features we fell in love with.'

The couple's thoughtful restoration has created a bridge between traditional and modern design and decor. 'We have a home with a deep-rooted sense of history that works harmoniously with modern luxury,' reflects Sophie. 'Life has many twists and turns, but we are so pleased that destiny led us to this cherished cottage.' 25