

# HOMES & GARDENS<sup>®</sup>

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## Chic & simple

DECORATING  
WITH TOILE  
**ADD CHARACTER  
WITH PANELLING**  
CREATING A SMART  
FRONT DOOR

### GLORIOUS GARDENS

The stories behind  
a magical cottage  
design and an  
urban family space

TASTY  
IRISH FISH  
RECIPES

### LIVING IN...

- A COUNTRY CHAPEL
- A VILLAGE SCHOOL





## LIVING ROOM

*An eau-de-nil sofa and coffee-coloured walls give this formal space a contemporary edge.*

**For similar sofa,** try Standard Arm sofa, from £3,650 plus fabric, George Smith, 020 7384 1004, georgesmith.co.uk.

**Curtains in Limoges,** silk, £47m, Colefax and Fowler, 020 8877 6400, colefax.com.

**Scala floor lamp,** £1,250, Brissi, 020 8133 7491, brissi.co.uk.



Now here is a challenge. Take one country house that has been untouched for 45 years and renovate it extensively (which entails ten builders working flat out for two years). Next, remodel the interior for 21st-century family life. Finally, make sure that nothing in the finished house looks new.

It might seem like a tall order, but it was one that Gilly Kemsley and Patrick Fennessy approached with equanimity when they bought Bittescombe in 2007. "We wanted a restoration project – a clean slate," says Gilly. "But we didn't want it to end up looking like a show home. It needed to have a slight edge, an

element of rough and tumble that would mean it was true to its history."

So, despite the prospect of building works that included diverting underground streams and enlarging every window, the couple went ahead. "We just fell in love with the house, then thought about it later," laughs Gilly.

Part of the attraction was the location, amid 67 acres of land near Exmoor. "We are outdoors people," says Gilly, "and Bittescombe lies in an amazingly beautiful area. We really like the privacy and the pace of life here is wonderfully slow."

Gilly and Patrick moved in with their sons, Freddie, 15, and Rupert, 11, but changed nothing for six months. "We felt we needed to live in it for a while to

## COURTYARD

*Gilly (left) created a courtyard garden that opens off the kitchen and filled the area with raised beds, planters and a fountain using reclaimed materials.*

**For similar planters,** try Masco at Walcot, 01225 444404, walcot.com.



**DINING ROOM**

*A mix of distressed furniture and antiques gives the recently renovated room a patina of age and prevents it from looking too pristine.*

**Paint on walls.** Blue Gray, Estate Emulsion, £26.50 for 2.5 litres, Farrow & Ball, 01202 876141, farrow-ball.com.

**Similar chandelier.** Tyson, 020 7720 9331, tysonltd.com. **Ladderstitch table linen.** from £15 for a napkin, Volga Linen, 0844 499 1609, volgalinen.co.uk.

