

DORSET RESTORATION

# Pure and SIMPLE

*This spacious family home has been reconfigured with a highly practical layout that gives it a charming informality*

WORDS JENNIFER GOULDING PHOTOGRAPHS MEL YATES



#### KITCHEN

James and Sarah asked their interior designer Emma Sims-Hilditch to source pieces by their favourite artists that would work well in their new home. The result includes these two animal paintings by Debbie Boon.

For Debbie Boon artwork, try Collier & Dobson, [collierdobson.com](http://collierdobson.com). **Suffolk kitchen** in shale, from £25,000; **Suffolk bar stools**, £385 each, all Neptune, [neptune.com](http://neptune.com).



#### DINING AND SITTING AREAS

The large French doors flanked by two generous windows reflect the symmetry of the garden beyond. The ceiling is clad in whitewash boards to add texture and improve the acoustics.

Interior design by Sims-Hilditch, [simshilditch.com](http://simshilditch.com).

Curtains in Cawdor in Mineral, BF10560.3, £149m, GP&J Baker, [gpjbaker.com](http://gpjbaker.com).





**DINING ROOM**


Upholstered chairs add a splash of colour and pattern to this intimate room.

Bespoke chairs in Queen's Sampler in Bronze, B10650.1, £149m. GP&J Baker, [gpjbaker.com](http://gpjbaker.com).









#### SITTING ROOM

A limestone fireplace gives this space a suitably formal focal point.

The Burlington fireplace, £2,154, Chesneys, chesneys.co.uk.

Curtains in Morrison in Icy Blue, L9035-01, £145m, Larsen at Colefax & Fowler, colefax.com.

When James and Sarah Ainsworth relocated to Dorset with their two daughters, they enlisted the expert help of interior designer Emma Sims-Hilditch to create the family home they had always aspired to. Here, we talk to James and Emma to discover more about the project

#### How well did you know the area?

**JA** We were not familiar with it and had no idea where we wanted to live, so we rented while we looked for somewhere to buy. Past mistakes had taught us to wait for the right house. Sarah and I are confident of our likes and dislikes, and we fully expected to be renovating whichever house we eventually found.

#### What did you discover while renting?

**JA** The house we rented had outbuildings, 27 acres of land and no immediate neighbours. It made us realise that although we wanted peace and quiet, we also wanted to be near the shops and within walking distance of the girls' schools. We now live in a peaceful cul-de-sac in town with everything we need nearby. Best of both worlds.

#### How long did it take to find the right house?

**JA** It was about a year. On paper the house did not meet any of our criteria, but the agent suggested we look at it anyway. It was not as big as the other houses we viewed, but we liked the feel of it. I suppose you don't know what you want until you see it.

#### Was the house in good condition?

**JA** The previous owners had converted it back to a family home from flats around five or six years ago. They had also tanked the cellar and made it into several rooms. However, it was not to our taste, particularly the kitchen, which for us is the most important room in the house.

#### Did you make any structural changes?

**ESH** We preserved the original, grand parts of the house while opening up and rationalising the secondary spaces that had been added later on. Key to achieving this was replacing the rear extension with a much larger, open-plan kitchen, dining and seating area.

#### What sort of brief did you give Emma?

**JA** We asked for something modern with lots of natural light that felt like a country home without any associated stuffiness. It had to be both practical and comfortable, but we also wanted it to look stunning.

**ESH** James and Sarah are very family orientated and it was important to reflect that. They wanted something calm but warm that was functional and not at all precious.

#### Is the kitchen still the most important part of the house?

**JA** It is a great and much-used room. Everyone can have their own space even when we are all in there together. There is a big table, lots of natural light and wonderful views of the hills, especially when the doors are wide open.









#### **HALL**

The original Victorian tiled floor inspired the colour palette for the entire house. Fleeing Pheasants cushion, £132, Chelsea Textiles, [chelseatextiles.com](http://chelseatextiles.com).

#### **BOOT ROOM**

The Ainsworth family are keen walkers so this smart and capacious boot room, which was created from three small rooms, is a valuable addition to the house.

Floor in Lubelska reclaimed brick tiles, £45.54/sq m, Kamstar, [kamstar.co.uk](http://kamstar.co.uk).

#### **FAMILY ROOM**

To take advantage of its low ceiling, this basement room has been turned into a cosy space where the family can relax, play board games and watch films together.

Twig mirror in aged plaster, £1,416, Porta Romana, [portaromana.com](http://portaromana.com).





#### **GUEST BEDROOM**

Tucked away at the top of the house, this room's tongue-and-groove panelling highlights the interesting shape of the ceiling. Cushions in Beldi in Stone, FWY 2389/02, £186m, William Yeoward at Designers Guild, [designersguild.com](http://designersguild.com).

#### **GUEST BATHROOM**

An opulent wallpaper makes this space a decadent, indulgent sanctuary. Walls in Indienne Tint in Wisteria wide width wallpaper, £65.52m, Lewis & Wood, [lewisandwood.com](http://lewisandwood.com).



#### MAIN BEDROOM

A warm, textured linen wallcovering gives James and Sarah's reconfigured room a sophisticated look. Walls in Montalin in Mist, WTT6410 94, £80 a linear metre, Stark, [starkcarpet.co.uk](http://starkcarpet.co.uk). Ascona glass vase table lamp, £1,224 (excluding shade), Vaughan, [vaughandesigns.com](http://vaughandesigns.com).