

PERIOD RENOVATION

# TO THE MANOR BORN

*Undaunted by the challenges of transforming a 17th-century farmhouse, its new owners have been rewarded with an elegant family home in modern English country house style*

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## EXTERIOR

The delisted farmhouse has undergone many changes in the course of its history, and Steve and Steph Thorne have spent many months restoring it to give it a new lease of life.

Construction: 3 Gen Construction,  
3genconstruction.co.uk.





#### DINING ROOM

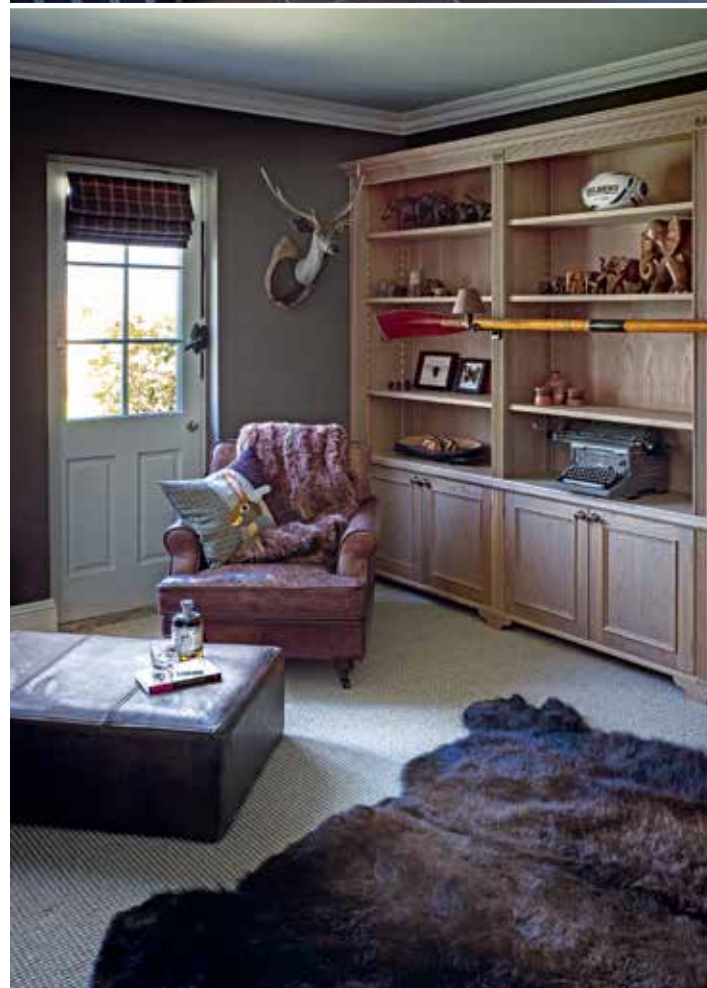
A favourite painting inspired the choice of the rich cobalt blue, which brings a colourful note to this north-facing room. "The family brought several artworks with them, so finding the right spot for each was important," says interior designer Emma Sims Hilditch. **Artwork**, Danielle O'Connor Akiyama, [danielleoconnorakiyama.co.uk](http://danielleoconnorakiyama.co.uk). **Oval Lartigue chandelier**, £4,656, Porta Romana, [portaromana.com](http://portaromana.com). **Henley chairs** in Imogen Brancaster Navy, from £760 a pair, Neptune, [neptune.com](http://neptune.com). **Wimbledon table**, from £4,595, I&JL Brown, [ijlbrown.com](http://ijlbrown.com).



#### ENTRANCE HALL-LIBRARY

This space, which doubles as an informal sitting room, is decorated with traditional country and industrial-inspired pieces, and sets the tone for the rest of the house. **Interior design**, Sims Hilditch, [simshilditch.com](http://simshilditch.com).





One of Steve Thorne's great passions in life is renovating properties and he has done up a number of houses over the years, including ones that he and his family have lived in. None of them, however, has been as old as this one, a romantically situated 17th-century farmhouse in the Dorset countryside. Steve discovered the house by chance while browsing a property website and, as he had promised his wife Steph that their existing home would be the last house he would renovate, he went to see it on his own first. He continues the story.

**Can you tell us what happened after the viewing?** It was at the height of summer and the house, which has extensive grounds, looked beautiful. Although Steph was none too happy about it, I persuaded her to view it too and, having seen it, she agreed we had to have it.

**Have you renovated period buildings before?** In a word, no. I was happy to manage the structural work, but as parts of the house date back to the 1600s and I am used to working on contemporary homes, I knew that some of the interior work would be a bit out of my league. I did not want to get this wrong so we decided to call in an interior designer to help us. We chose Emma Sims Hilditch because we had seen her website, which features rooms with the elegant, muted shades and pops of colour that Steph and I love; it was the modern country look that we were after.

**What structural work did you undertake?** The house had not been touched for years so, not surprisingly, we needed to repair the roof, rewire and put in new plumbing, but in doing so we found that we also needed to rebuild chimneys, replace the iron guttering and the down pipes, and put in new windows and doors, and we had to replaster throughout. The ground floor had been laid straight onto dirt so we decided to take up the flooring throughout this level and we excavated four feet down before putting in a new wood floor.

**Did you extend the house?** We installed a two-storey oak frame extension at the back, so that we could enlarge the kitchen and have a boot room leading off it, with a guest bedroom on the floor above. I love oak frames and since putting in the extension, I have used the same kind of construction to convert the garage, to turn the pigsty into a gymnasium and to build an outdoor kitchen.

**What was your design inspiration for the rooms?** I wanted to emulate the eclectic style of designer Kit Kemp, and the colours for the sitting room and our bedroom were inspired by the rooms in our favourite Crosby Street Hotel in New York. Steph was particularly involved in creating the kitchen as she had a clear vision of how it should work.

**Will this be your last renovation project?** I am always on the lookout for the next one, but I admit that as we live through the passing seasons here, I've found myself falling in love with this house more and more. I know Steph would like it to be our "forever" home, and we have just taken on a flock of chickens, so who knows?



#### STAIRCASE

Steve and Steph decided to remove the original, dark-wood staircase as it made the hall feel rather gloomy. In its place stands a new design (opposite page, top), albeit with the original handrail. The full-length mirror on the half landing draws natural light down from the windows above. Adam's Eden wallpaper in Ivory, £63.60 a roll, Lewis & Wood, lewisandwood.co.uk.

#### STUDY

"This is my favourite room," says Steve of this restful space (left). "It's used for the day-to-day running of the property, but I also like to escape in here sometimes."

#### KITCHEN

This newly extended space (above), with its rustic wood inset ceiling, meets the needs of the Thornes' young family as well as being a relaxed area for entertaining. "Guests can sit at each island, with the person cooking in between and everything within easy reach," says Steve. Suffolk kitchen, around £80,000; Browning lantern pendants, £470 each; both Neptune, neptune.com.

#### BOOT ROOM

The brick floor of what was once a tack room (right) has been renewed and Emma chose cabinets from Neptune to house the boots and shoes, leaving space behind them for a shower for the dogs. "Everyone insisted on installing it for our two golden retrievers, but I said we'd never use it," says Steve, "and we don't. Well, not for the dogs; I use it when I come in from kite surfing."







#### SITTING ROOM

The off-centre fireplace is original and remains a striking focal point in this formal room. Steph's collection of old framed maps adds character throughout the house. "When Steph and I were first dating," says Steve, "I bought her a map of the Bronx, which is

where she lived before she moved to Britain." **Juliette 815 chandelier**, £2,195, Estro, [estro.it](http://estro.it). **Banquette** in Layton in Henna, £71.50m, Romo, [romo.com](http://romo.com). **Table lamp base** in Radicchio, Estate Eggshell, £24 for 750ml, Farrow & Ball, [farrowball.com](http://farrowball.com).





#### MAIN BEDROOM

The couple brought few items of furniture with them to their new home, preferring to start from scratch with pieces in keeping with the age of the farmhouse and the size of its rooms. "In the bedroom (left and above), the bold colours and eclectic mix of furniture were inspired by the couple's favourite Kit Kemp hotels," says Emma, "and instead of a pattern, we used linen wallpaper to give the room an extra textural touch."

**Headboard and chair** in Bordeaux in Pivoine, £137m, Manuel Canovas, [manuelcanovas.com](http://manuelcanovas.com). **Flamant Les Unis linen wallcovering** in Beach, £123 a roll, Arte International, [arte-international.com](http://arte-international.com).

#### BATHROOM

The walk-in shower area (right), a new addition to the couple's bathroom, brings a lustrous sheen and luxurious feel to this elegant space.

**La Chapelle flared spout basin mixer** with white Torpille levers in silver nickel, £994.80; **Edwardian ladder towel warmer** in silver nickel, £1,941.60; **Lissa Doon basins**, £447.60 each; **basin stands** in silver nickel, £1,790.03 each; all Lefroy Brooks, [uk.lefroybrooks.com](http://uk.lefroybrooks.com).







#### LANDING

A new flight of steps (above left) links the extension with the original house. Unable to find a handrail similar to the original one, Steve called in a set painter from the *Downton Abbey* television series to paint the new rail to match it instead.

#### TWINS' BEDROOM

The original plan was for the girls to have separate rooms, but they insisted on sharing. They decorated the chandelier (above) with fluffy pompoms, butterflies and chicken-shaped bells to help stop their father from constantly banging his head on it.

**Antique Louis XV single beds**, The Bed Workshop, [thebedworkshop.co.uk](http://thebedworkshop.co.uk). **Beds upholstered in Faded Dotty Butterflies on White Linen**, £64m, Peony & Sage, [peonyandsage.com](http://peonyandsage.com).

#### TWINS' BATHROOM

To create a classic country farmhouse feel, half-height tongue-and-groove cladding was chosen for this compact space (left).

**La Chapelle bath shower mixer** in silver nickel, £4,498.80, Lefroy Brooks, [uk.lefroybrooks.com](http://uk.lefroybrooks.com).

**Plumbing and heating installation**, Pinevale, [pinevale.co.uk](http://pinevale.co.uk).

