

## Living room

The eclectic mix of vibrant colours and soft furnishings contrasts beautifully with the pale pink walls, bringing depth and variety to this scheme. **Walls** painted in Chemise, Little Greene. **Sofa and chairs**, Sofa.com. **Cushions**, Anthropologie. **Lamps and shades**, Pooky





# BRIGHT OUTLOOK

*Francesca Reed's imaginative refurbishment of this listed farmhouse has created a colourful and welcoming retreat with an uplifting take on Victorian style*







### **Exterior**

The brick numbers reveal the true age of this farmhouse, which after nearly 400 years is now a beautifully remodelled Victorian-style rural retreat



### **AT HOME WITH**

**Owners** Francesca Reed, a designer, and her husband Peter Robertson live here with their son Beau, eight, daughters Attica, six, and Margot, four, plus their Burmese cat Lily.

**House** A three-bedroom, 17th-century Grade II-listed farmhouse near Deal, purchased in 2020.

Reflecting on the renovation of their 17th-century farmhouse in Kent, Francesca Reed and her husband Peter Robertson say they 'naively' underestimated the work required to revive its quintessential English charm. 'It was in a terrible condition but it was clear there was so much potential to be realised,' says Francesca, who admits the to-do list was very long. 'The roof leaked and the pipework was in a poor state. In fact, broken pipes had caused damage to the floors and walls.'

But the problems didn't stop there. After removing the ruined floorboards, woodworm was discovered, which meant not only replacing joists but fumigating the entire house. 'Basically, we were left with the four external walls because we needed a new roof, too.'

As well as replacing all the damaged parts of the property, Francesca and Peter knew a complete reconfiguration of each floor was required to get the best out of the house. 'During the 1970s, the layout was reorganised with the ground floor based around two staircases, each going up to a bedroom. Curiously, there was no way of getting from one bedroom to the other without descending one staircase and ascending the next. It wasn't very practical,' says Francesca, who hired architects TaylorHare for the redesign.

Because the property was Grade II-listed, TaylorHare had to secure the requisite planning consent before >



***Dining room***

Farmhouse furniture found on Facebook Marketplace has been brought to life with bold paint shades. For a similar **table**, try Farmhouse Table Co. **Ceiling light**, Dowsing & Reynolds. **Wall lights**, Pooky. Similar birds' egg poster, Kuriosis







**Kitchen**

To maintain a traditional look, modern appliances have been cleverly tucked away in the utility room behind. **Cabinets**, Wren. **Shelf brackets**, Rockett St George. For Andy Warhol **cat print**, try King & McGaw

embarking on the project. The team then focused on the ground floor and created a layout that offers an effortless cooking, dining and living experience.

The dining and living spaces are now intertwined to become the heart of the ground floor, while the kitchen was relocated and transformed into a generous open-plan country-style space. But what is especially noticeable within Maison Blanche - the name that Francesca and Peter have chosen for their new home - is its light and airy, post-restoration atmosphere.

One of the property's earlier owners was naturalist FWL Sladen, who wrote a definitive guide on bees. Published in 1912, *The Humble-Bee* detailed the raising and domesticating of these insects. A subtle nod to the author can be seen in the abundance of pollinator-friendly lavender edging the path leading to the front door, which displays an ornate bee knocker.

While the house's condition necessitated extensive work, Francesca was keen to retain characteristics of its past. She decided to concentrate on one era from the property's 400-year history. 'I chose a stripped down, modern Victorian look, which is echoed in the square architraves around doors and boxy skirtings. For the kitchen, I wanted to use traditional Victorian fittings and tiles, while keeping the lines fairly clean and contemporary without too much fussiness.'

Upstairs, the main bedroom, with its whitewashed >





“EVERY HOUSE SHOULD HAVE BOOKS BECAUSE THEY BECOME A DECORATION IN THEMSELVES. OUR COLOUR-COORDINATED BOOKSHELVES ARE ONE OF THE MOST COMMENTED-ON FEATURES”



### **Library**

Grouping the books by colour brings an unexpected dimension to this room. **Chair**, Oka. **Light fittings**, Jim Lawrence. **Shades**, Pooky. **Table and chair** covered in Liberty print





**Staircase**

The rope banister is a nod to the house's coastal location on the outskirts of Deal. **Stairs** painted in Privet Hedge, Valspar. For a rope **banister**, try StairRopes.com



**Main bedroom**

Double aspect windows allow the sun to stream in, bouncing off crisp white bedding and whitewashed beams. **Cushions** and **rug**, Oka. **Light fitting**, Jim Lawrence. **Shade**, Pooky

“HISTORIC CRAFTSMANSHIP AND TRADITIONAL SKILLS HAVE BEEN KEY TO THE BUILDING’S RESTORATION”



**Bathroom**

Restored windows tucked into the attic eaves frame wonderful views of the garden and countryside beyond. **Bath**, Hudson Reed. For a similar **towel rack**, try Vinterior





### Bedroom

Pops of yellow inject a joyful feel while the rich tones of the antique drawers add warmth. Oliver **beds**, Feather & Black. **Lamps**, Pooky

beams, is a peaceful, calming space tucked away in the attic. Nestled into the apex, it affords Francesca and Peter glorious views of the garden and fields beyond.

'I wanted the house to have a sense of tradition but didn't want the interiors feeling heavy, so I chose a light colour palette and kept the soft furnishings whimsical. I like the decor to feel curated but not overwhelming,' Francesca explains. This approach extends into the garden, where the generous gravel driveway wrapping around the eastern perimeter allows the house to gradually reveal itself.

The renovation took a year to complete but the wait was well worth it. 'It has been transformed from a sad, decaying house to a light and joyous space. In summer, we can throw open the windows and enjoy the closeness to nature. In winter, we can turn up the heating and feel warm and cosy on the sofa with a good book from the library upstairs.'

Maison Blanche has given Francesca and Peter their first taste of country living and they wouldn't swap it for the world. 'It's the greenery and calmness that make it so wonderful,' enthuses Francesca. 'To be honest, having so much space around us means it would be very hard going back to having neighbours again!'

**Maison Blanche can be booked through Unique Homestays, [uniquehomestays.com](http://uniquehomestays.com). For information on TaylorHare, visit [taylorhare.com](http://taylorhare.com)**

### ON OUR DOORSTEP

**Visit...** 'Deal Castle was built by Henry VIII in the middle of the 16th century and is among England's finest Tudor castles. There is a view of Deal beach from the battlements - and a good coffee shop, too!'

**Shop at...** 'Arno & Co Grocer (@arno\_and\_co), a modern gourmet food shop in Deal, sells quality snacks and meals for the beach as well as the home.'

**Go for a meal at...** 'The Rose (theroseddeal.com) is a hotel, bar and restaurant that has been a significant landmark on the high street in Deal for over 200 years.'