

Perfect TEAMING

This magnificent country house has been revitalised with thoughtful decorating choices to reflect its owners' love of classic English style and passion for horses

FEATURE & STYLING ANNABELLE GRUNDY
PHOTOGRAPHY COLIN POOLE

The upper parts of the drawing room walls are painted in Farrow & Ball's Lichen, whilst Zoffany's Quarter Linen lightens and transforms the oak panelling below. The floral footstool and curtains were made by Jojo Bradley Interiors using a Ralph Lauren fabric.



The boot room's Martin Moore furniture echoes that in the kitchen. Ellie bought the horse painting at a local auction. The blind fabric is Éperon d'Or by Hermès. Polo sticks found at Burghley Horse Trials rest in an antique stand Ellie spotted online at Decorative Collective.



Viewing her rural Cheshire home for the first time, Ellie Barlow was taken by its symmetrical frontage and elegant, landscaped gardens. The peaceful setting was idyllic, the surrounding agricultural land and outbuildings were ideal for her horses and dogs, and the interior layout would suit family life with her husband Richard and their young children, Maisie, six and Henry, three. “I made an offer before Richard had even seen it, but I knew he’d love it too,” she says. “It looked quite imposing from the outside, but inside it felt like a very liveable home.”

The seven-bedroom, Grade II listed house, which has eighteenth-century origins, has been extended over time and had undergone a complete renovation within the last 10 years. However, the interior lacked the welcoming character and country appeal Ellie was after. “There were beige tones everywhere and a lot of natural oak. Although my taste is quite subdued, I wanted a more relaxed, inviting interior, that felt like a proper home with dogs and children around.”

Although the house did not need any major building work, Ellie had no doubt that she wanted to redecorate, ►

ABOVE Morse the border terrier looks on in the kitchen, which has remained largely untouched as Ellie was happy with the classic black Aga, granite work surfaces and Martin Moore cabinetry.

LEFT Ellie liked the idea of a traditional, symmetrical entrance hall. Jojo Bradley Interiors sourced the antique, mahogany table and supplied bespoke occasional chairs, upholstered in a fabric by Hodsoll McKenzie.



‘It was important to blend the outside and inside smoothly, and to introduce a real English country house feel’

ABOVE Ellie and Richard love to entertain on a generous scale. Along with the upholstered dining chairs, Jojo Bradley Interiors sourced the spectacular antique dining table.

furnish and accessorise the interior almost from scratch. She approached interior designer Jojo Bradley, initially to discuss making some curtains but, as the pair started chatting and looking around the house, Ellie found herself inspired by Jojo’s suggestions. This was the start of a productive, two-year collaboration during which almost every room has been transformed, with Jojo’s involvement ranging from sourcing key items like the magnificent antique dining table, to advising on the fine details of fabrics and trims. Ellie had a clear vision of the effect she was aiming for. “It was important to blend the outside and inside smoothly, and to introduce a real English country house feel,” she says, adding, “I’ve been horse-riding all my life and it’s my absolute passion, so I wanted my home to reflect that personal aspect too.”

Ellie’s love of horses is clear to see throughout the house, in the numerous equine paintings, drawings and sculptures, as well as in subtle decorative touches such as as bridle-motif fabric designs and leather-trimmed lamps and mirrors. Unsurprisingly, one of her favourite rooms is the library, a cosy, intimate space created by sectioning off one end of the large entrance hall, and decorated in gentle green, blue and pink mid-tones against a neutral backdrop. The off-white walls feature hand-painted panels, each depicting a vintage horse-racing scene that includes local landmarks and images of the three family dogs, Marple, Morse and Lewis.

The same palette has been carried through the whole house, bringing a sense of tranquillity and flow that had been lacking before. The property’s stiff lines have been softened by sumptuous curtains, ►



ABOVE Ellie commissioned decorator Miles Negus-Fancey to paint the library’s charming racing scenes. The velvet sofas are from Robert Kime, and the footstool was inspired by an image Ellie spotted in *The English Home*.

LEFT A classic stone fireplace lends a formal air to the drawing room. The wall colour is picked up in the upholstered footstool and a hand-embroidered curtain fabric by Chelsea Textiles. The painting above the fireplace is by Daniel Crane.



ABOVE LEFT The rich raspberry tone of Kate Forman fabric on the chairs brings a shot of colour to the landing. The hue is echoed in the lampshades. The equestrian scene above the console is by Daniel Crane.

ABOVE RIGHT Jojo Bradley Interiors created upholstered walls with fabric from Fermoie to give this guest bedroom a cosy character.

RIGHT Ellie in the grounds of her home with poodle Marple.

upholstered seating, padded footstools and headboards, fabric-lined walls and generous scatterings of plump, patterned cushions.

Ellie is delighted with the difference in mood that has been achieved, especially given the architectural challenges of certain rooms. Several, including the dining room and master bedroom, have low, beamed ceilings, making them seem dark. “In an ideal world there would be more height and better natural light, but Jojo and I have worked with what we have and put in interesting table lamps and wall lights for colour and atmosphere,” she says.

The drawing room, one of the most difficult rooms, is long and has two distinct zones, so it demanded a cohesive approach to give it a unified feel. “We’ve repainted and rearranged this room more than once,” says Ellie. “Getting the right layout has been tricky, and the light varies enormously from one end to the other. I’ve started adding antique wooden pieces as a foil for the soft colours and upholstery.” ▶





ABOVE Son Henry's bedroom scheme is built around the bespoke upholstered headboard, which is covered in Kit Kemp's Moondog print. The leather bedside lamps are from Ralph Lauren Home. The walls are painted in Aubusson by Zoffany. **RIGHT** Old black-and-white photographs of her Cheshire home inspired Ellie to reinstate colourful flower borders leading up to the front door.

One of the simplest yet most effective proposals put forward by Jojo was to paint the natural oak doors, wall-panels and staircases. Ellie was initially hesitant, as covering up so much high-quality timber seemed a radical step as well as a massive, labour-intensive task, but she now has no regrets as the painted woodwork has boosted light throughout and brought a fresher, more attractive ambience into the house. "There were points where Jojo counselled me to be a bit braver and I definitely grew more confident as the project progressed," she says. "We inherited a classic, well-built, wooden kitchen, but it was all neutral and felt a bit dull. I've recently had the units painted dark navy blue, which has given it so much more impact."

With Jojo's input, Ellie has successfully managed a large, complex transformation and, as a bonus, the two have developed a firm friendship. Ellie has also overseen extensive work outdoors, improving the gardens and installing equestrian facilities for her dressage horses and the family ponies. "So much has been done in such a short space of time, I haven't really stopped since we moved here," she says. "This really feels like our home now and it's time to relax and enjoy what we've created." ■

