

# HOUSE & GARDEN

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THERE; WHAT TO  
COOK WHEN  
YOU GET HOME

# APPOSITE ADDITION

*This perfect seventeenth-century rectory was flawed by its impractical layout; a sympathetic extension ensured that modern needs could be met without detracting from the house's essential character*

TEXT LIZ ELLIOT | PHOTOGRAPHS SIMON BROWN



If asked to imagine our dream country house, many of us would describe somewhere not too dissimilar to Kingham Rectory in Oxfordshire. Praised by Nikolaus Pevsner as being one of the finest small seventeenth-century houses in the county, it was described by a more recent visitor as being 'a wonderful doll's house that makes you want to take off the front and play with the furniture inside'.

The house stands next to the Norman church of St Andrew, overlooking Kingham, voted Britain's favourite village by the readers of *Country Life*. The five-bay square building has a raised entrance hall, flanked by a drawing room to the left and a children's playroom to the right, which leads through to a handsome staircase hall at the rear with views over the garden. Its high ceilings and beautifully proportioned rooms give an impression of luxurious but totally manageable space.

Until 30 years ago it belonged to the church. One family lived on the top floor and another in the basement, with the vicar and his family sandwiched in the middle. There were two bathrooms, one in the

basement and one, to be shared by the upper three floors, off what was then a back staircase. The first non-clerical owner immediately installed en-suite bathrooms for each bedroom.

The current owners came across the house six years ago when they were living in London with three young children. 'We were immensely lucky as it was the first house we saw. I think that it had just come back on the market and people did not know it was for sale,' says the owner. 'When we walked up the front steps and looked down the hall to the view beyond, it was somehow impossible to say no.'

When they moved in, they decided, sensibly, to do nothing to the house for a year. The original kitchen would have been in the basement, but this had been converted into the housekeeper's apartment. The kitchen they inherited was in what is today the television room; it had french windows and was attached to a topsy-turvy Victorian extension that housed the utility room and dog kennels.

The owners' main priority was to retain the original character of the

**THIS PAGE FROM LEFT** The orangery-style kitchen extension was added to one side of the house. Built on a slope, the house is taller at the front than the back. From the front door there is a view through the front and

staircase halls to the garden. The drawing room is to the left of the entrance. **OPPOSITE** Despite the drawing room's dark panelling, furniture by Christian Liaigre, upholstered in pale colours, gives it a calm, modern feel







house but make it fit for modern life, with updated bathrooms and a larger, family-friendly kitchen. Having spent weekends in Babington House, and been impressed by its design and finish, they approached the architects, Michaelis Boyd Associates, for an opinion.

Brought up in Oxfordshire, Alex Michaelis is sympathetic to the Cotswold vernacular and decided on minimal intervention. To rearrange the house he suggested removing the little-used back stairs and replacing them with a bathroom and dressing room for the main bedroom. Instead of shoehorning a modern kitchen into an old house, he decided to remove the Victorian extension and replace it with a new kitchen – a master stroke, as taking the kitchen out of the house allowed the four ground-floor rooms to return to their original uses as living areas.

Encouraged by sympathetic planners, who insisted that any extension should 'stand up to the house', Alex developed his original, rather modest, proposal for the kitchen into a larger room in the style of an

orangery. Built of the same stone as the house, and with windows if not imitating, then at least echoing those of the original, the extension is perfectly scaled, and the building now works as a whole.

Garden designer Jinny Blom was asked to rework the garden. 'The clients enjoy gardening, so this project was very much a collaborative effort,' she explains. Together they planned the generous paved terrace and the magnolia-filled white borders that run along a walkway from the kitchen, down the lawn to a ha-ha. They planted an orchard of plums, damsons, greengages, pears and cherries at the back of the barn, and it was Jinny's idea to put pleached limes along a border between the swimming pool and an adjoining cottage. The pool is a soft azure – a result of Jinny's decision to line the interior with stone-coloured tiles. 'We took some persuading,' admit the clients. 'You forget that water is not colourless – and the result is perfect.'

The barn was the first part to be renovated and provided a home for

**OPPOSITE** The kitchen is lit by large windows; a bench stretches their length along one side, and, with a mixture of Arne Jacobsen's 'Series 7' and simple wooden chairs, provides seating for a long table. **THIS PAGE TOP ROW FROM LEFT** A dresser remains in the area between the former kitchen and dining room.

The new kitchen is by Bulthaup. An arched opening connects kitchen and television room. Essentially a passage, this was previously the kitchen. **BOTTOM ROW FROM LEFT** French windows open on to the garden. The hall bench is from B&B Italia. A chandelier from Andrew Nebbett Antiques hangs over the stairwell



**BOTH PAGES CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT** Upstairs, one of the spare rooms is panelled entirely in pine. Its connecting bathroom also has a wooden floor, but the curved wall and white fittings keep the look modern. The study is also on the first floor; the desk is from Decoratum at Allies Antique Market. In the main bedroom, a peacock-blue-velvet, Ico Parisi chaise longue from B&T Antiques,

under an oversize light - 'Arco' by Achille Castiglioni - adds an element of drama to this neutral scheme. Plain white walls emphasise the architectural mouldings. Every bedroom in the house has an en-suite bathroom. This spare room has one wall papered in 'Cow Parsley' by Cole & Son, set off by a 'Random' carbon-fibre light by Moooi, and ESpiqa lights from Bowles and Linares







the family while work continued on the main house. Used previously as a garage and dumping ground, it now contains a steam room, cinema, two large bedrooms, a kitchen and a sitting room. To protect the swimming pool from the wind, Alex placed it behind the barn, into which he installed two huge sliding glass doors so that the views through to the rest of the garden could still be enjoyed. 'When the time came to move back into the house, we had to invite some friends to stay there in order to get the children to move,' laugh the clients. The barn is now a favourite among friends and family alike.

As building work neared completion, the clients asked decorator Sarah Delaney to help with furnishing the house. 'We like coming to decorating decisions slowly,' they explain, 'and Sarah was wonderful at allowing us to do that.' Although they had relatively few pieces of furniture, over the years they had built up quite a collection of paintings, many of which were subtle in colour. Using these as her starting

**OPPOSITE** The barn provides self-contained accommodation, with bedrooms, a kitchen, sitting room, cinema and steam room; two large, sliding-glass doors were installed into the barn to allow views from the swimming pool through to the rest of the garden. **THIS PAGE** The pool is lined with stone-coloured tiles

point, Sarah painted the rooms throughout the house with shades from the Slate collection by the Paint & Paper Library.

The addition of the separate kitchen allowed them to differentiate more clearly between the living spaces, giving each one a different role. 'I was completely flummoxed by the dark panelling in the main drawing room,' laughs the client, 'but Sarah's introduction of simple but sophisticated L'aignre furniture has made it a grown-up and peaceful room.' The hall was kept uncluttered, the children's room informal, and the television room very simple.

'Everything is done in a quiet manner,' explains Sarah. 'This is not in any way a show-off house: it is light, airy, quiet and spacious. It is, in fact, a perfect house in every way' □

*Michaelis Boyd Associates (tel: 020-7221 1237; www.michaelisboyd.com)*

*Jenny Blom (tel: 020-7253 2100; www.jennyblom.com)*

*Sarah Delaney Design (tel: 020-7221 2010; www.sarahdelaneydesign.co.uk)*

- which give it its azure colour - and surrounded by York-stone flags; the borders are filled with cottage garden plants and backed by pleached limes, which enclose the area and keep it private. At the back of the barn, an orchard planted by the owners is filled with flowers