

ENGLISH HOME

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STEP INTO SUMMER

Outdoor living • Seasonal style updates • Gorgeous garden ideas

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Decorating advice from Nina Campbell,
William Yeoward, Tricia Guild & more

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confidence**

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In the breakfast room
bespoke rug and
curtains in a
Churchill fabric were
made by Mel Thorpe
Country Knote Interiors
She also supplied the
table, which has a painted
base and a walnut top

Oasis of SERENITY

The generous proportions of a handsome Victorian villa
offer a welcome sanctuary in the middle of town

WORDS VICTORIA JENKINS PHOTOGRAPHS WILLIAM GODDARD STYLING JILL SHEARER



ABOVE A two-storey extension was added to the house, the ground floor of which added extra space to the existing kitchen. Robert Charles of Taunton designed and handmade the bespoke cabinetry and added Indian marble worktops.

RIGHT The curtains and pelmet in the dining room were chosen and designed by Mel Thorne and feature an Anna French embroidered silk with contrast pleating in silk in the pelmet.

When Jane and Michael Donoghue decided it was time to move from their picturesque thatched home with a lovely four-acre garden to somewhere that was easier to manage, they looked for a property in a nearby Somerset market town to be closer to the centre of things. Upon viewing the Grade II listed mid-Victorian house they eventually bought, aside from its convenient location in the centre of the town, the thing that most strongly appealed about it was the beautiful view over one of the town's large parks from the top floor. "When I first saw the beautiful floor-to-ceiling sash windows and shutters and the glorious view, I couldn't believe I might be lucky enough to live there," Jane says.

However, before they could move in, the house needed a few alterations. "There was a lean-to outside the kitchen which housed a larder and a flight of steps up to the street," Jane recalls. "We demolished that and built a two-storey extension to make better use of the space, the ground floor of which became part of the kitchen, the upper floor a bathroom, and another rather cramped bathroom became a shower room." ▶



Jane made the yellow swags herself and the scheme of the drawing room is based around these. The wood burner is from Chesney's and the yellow armchair from John Le



LEFT The wicker furniture is Four Seasons from Blackdown Garden Centre and the statue came from a foundry in Chelsea, London.

BELOW LEFT Jane brought the parasols home from Ibiza. They came from a shop called Can Nut in Calla Llonga, who in turn had imported them from Indonesia.

BELOW RIGHT The lamps on the landing came from John Lewis and the blinds are made from a James Hare silk.



Part way through the building work, the house next door came onto the market and the couple were fortunate enough to be in a position to buy it. "The two houses had originally been a single house which had been divided up in 1936," says Jane. "I've often wondered whether it was originally an officer's quarters as the Somerset Light Infantry was based here in Victorian times."

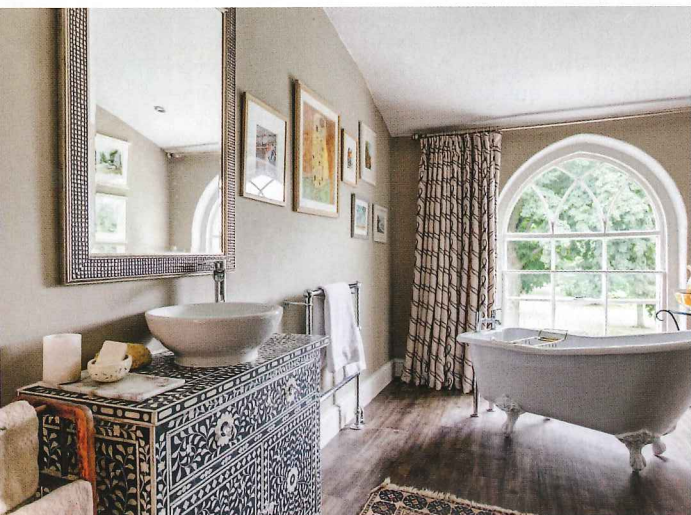
Both houses were listed, so the Donoghues had to obtain Listed Building Consent to knock through the wall dividing the two houses and reinstate the original staircase. "At one point I had to go up the stairs of one house, cross the landing, then come down the second lot of stairs to get anywhere," says Jane. "The builders also repaired some of the rotten roof rafters and the lead guttering at the rear. But then events overtook us..." Tragically, before the couple were able to move in, Jane became a widow. She decided to push ahead with the plans, as with four grown-up children and nine grandchildren, she knew the rooms would be used when family came to visit.

Once Jane had moved in, it became apparent that more building work would be needed. Previous owners

had enlarged the kitchen by borrowing space from the original drawing room, which was now asymmetrical. "It was impossible to arrange the furniture properly," Jane says. "I had the wall moved back to its original position and sold the kitchen cabinetry to three young men who turned up one Sunday and dismantled it. That kitchen is now a laundry room." There was a wall dividing the master bedroom, so Jane had it removed to return the bedroom to its original size. "It turned out that it was actually holding up the top floor so the builders had to quickly put in an RSJ," she continues.

Once the building work was complete, Jane sought help with the decorating from Mel Thorne of Country Knole Interiors. "I used to work as a textile designer, but I'd still have painted my house in a 'safe' magnolia," she says. "Luckily Mel had quite different ideas. We chose an item in each room for inspiration and the schemes grew up around them. For example, I wanted a very restful effect in the dining room so Mel chose soft blue-greens, inspired by my collection of antique 'Milan' china, which I wanted to display in there. I had also put such a huge effort into ▶

ABOVE Jane sewed the swag and tail curtains herself in Sanderson's Roses and Etchings fabric. The feature wall is painted in Farrow & Ball's Mole's Breath and the other walls are painted in Quarter Silver by Zoffany. The chenille sofa is from Tamarisk and the paisley cushions are in Nina Campbell's Braemar fabric, distributed by Osborne & Little.



sewing my yellow swags and tails for the drawing room that I wasn't going to change them; Mel, however, was able to choose soothing colours that blended with the colour of the curtain fabric to create a restful scheme." The master bedroom needed something dramatic to work with its now expansive proportions. "Mel suggested a four poster bed," Jane explains. "It's so heavy though, that now it's in place we won't ever move it. She also suggested a dramatic wallpaper with vibrant, uplifting colour to add impact." Jane has cleverly combined antiques and luxurious soft furnishings with a sprinkling of unexpected high-street finds. "I think that if you choose carefully you can achieve some wonderful effects by blending the inexpensive with the costly," she says.

Out in the garden there were a great many trees and shrubs, all slanting down a 70cm slope. Jane consulted garden designer Jon Neil who took out the trees and the shrubs, designing a clever raised 'garden within a garden' edged with box hedging in a pared-back Lutyens style. "Now you can't tell that the garden slopes at all," says Jane.

Despite the sad circumstances surrounding the move, Jane now feels settled in her elegant, light-filled surroundings. "The house felt right as soon as I saw it. Now I wake up every day and see the magnificent trees in the park and people constantly coming and going and think how fortunate I am to be in such a lovely house." ■

ABOVE The imposing bespoke bed in the master bedroom was made by Turnpost. The wallpaper is Crowe Hall Lane from Little Greene and the bedside tables are from The Court House in Wiveliscombe.

LEFT ABOVE Jane discovered this bed with its French nineteenth-century headboard in an antiques shop in Bath. The walls are in Farrow & Ball's Setting Plaster.

LEFT BELOW An inlaid chest has been converted into a vanity unit in the bathroom. The flooring is wood-effect linoleum flooring and the curtains are in embroidered linen from Larsen.