



FEATURE SHARON SMITH  
PHOTOGRAPHS CHRISTOPHER DRAKE



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT The conservatory is used for informal dining. The table and chairs are from Augustus Brandt; the hurricane lamps from Michael Reeves, with ceiling lanterns from Jamb. The entrance hall is in the original part of the house. The lamps are by Vaughan.



## A house for ALL SEASONS

*A combination of clever structural changes and a fresh new colour palette has transformed a dark Tudor mansion into a glorious light-filled home*



**AT HOME**  
Barbara and Angus Whiteside, a retired businessman, live in a Grade II listed mansion in Sussex whose core dates back to the fifteenth century. Sitting in 700 acres of rolling countryside, the property was used as a hunting lodge by Henry VIII. The couple have five grown-up children and nine grandchildren

**W**hen Barbara Whiteside set eyes on what was to be her new home nestling in 700 acres of rolling Sussex countryside, she was not immediately enamoured. Although impressed that Henry VIII had once used the house as a hunting lodge, the illustrious history was not quite enough to offset her unfavourable first impressions of dour and dated furnishings in need of hauling into the twenty-first century.

“Whilst I loved the history of the house, I hated the décor because everywhere was so dark and decorated in a heavy Tudor style, which wasn’t at all to my taste,” confesses Barbara. “There was a green carpet in the sitting room, brown sofas, dark coloured walls, purple carpet in the master bedroom, with a green en-suite bathroom. It was all very dark and rather dated.”

Nor was she much more impressed with the layout. “The house had six bedrooms but the kitchen was tiny, the entrance hall cramped, and we had to walk through the bathroom to get to the master bedroom, which overlooked the driveway so had no views of the countryside all around us,” continues Barbara.

Angus and his previous wife had bought the house the day after the storms of 1987, with trees down ▶



Barbara chose a light palette for the sitting room, which was added to the house in the 1930s. The sofas are by Beaumont and Fletcher with handmade cushions by Threads and a table lamp by Porta Romana.



*In the sixteenth century, Henry VIII occasionally used to stay overnight whilst he was on hunting trips*

everywhere on the estate when they came to view it. "After Angus's first wife died, he continued to live here because he loved it so much," explains Barbara. "When we married, I knew he did not want to move, so I agreed we could stay, as long as I could redecorate."

Gloomy decor and quirky layout aside, Barbara liked the house itself, rich with history and character. Records suggest its core dates back to around the fifteenth century, when it was built as a farmhouse. In the sixteenth century, Henry VIII occasionally used it to stay overnight when he was on hunting trips in the surrounding countryside. The kitchen was added in Victorian times, and the wing containing the sitting room and the master bedroom and en-suite upstairs was built in the 1930s by previous owners.

Although Barbara had plenty of ideas, she enlisted the help of interior designer Thomson Carpenter to advise how to put them into action. "I met Tom through my daughter Sophie who lives in Australia," explains Barbara. "When I was visiting, Sophie showed me a house Tom had worked on out there and I loved it. I liked the way Tom put things together in a style that was neither ultra-modern nor old-fashioned. When I wanted to renovate the house, ▶

**CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE LEFT** In the sitting room the wingback chairs have been recovered in fabric from Threads with bespoke cushions in fabrics from Threads and Colefax & Fowler, trimmed with brush fringe by Robert Allen. The period feel of the 15th century dining room is enhanced with Chinoiserie-style vases, from an antiques shop in Petworth and lamps converted from 18th-century French stone balustrades, from Nicholas Haslam. The hall is part of the house's original 15th century core, with beams and an aged stone floor. The glass ceiling lantern is from Vaughan.



**CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE** A capacious island, housing the Aga, provides a social hub for the kitchen, painted in Charleston Gray by Farrow & Ball. The Plain English kitchen is in the Victorian part of the house, created by knocking three rooms together. The French flag holder above the Lacanche stove is a memento from Barbara's days as a deputy mayor in Normandy. Cushions covered in fabric from Chelsea Textiles make the kitchen window seat a cosy spot. A gun room-cum-boot room allows for outdoor wear to be stowed neatly.

I contacted Tom. By chance he was coming back to England to live so I immediately enlisted his help."

The first priority for Barbara, who is French but has lived in England for many years, was to flood the house with light. "We are deep in the countryside here, so we need to make the most of the sun we get, especially in England," she laughs. For Barbara, that meant replacing the purples, greens and browns with a lighter palette of creams, pale yellows and white with splashes of bold colour in a classic, country style.

A sociable, outgoing couple with five children and nine grandchildren between them and a wide circle of friends, Barbara and Angus needed a house where they could entertain family and friends as well as hold more formal events such as shooting parties on the estate. "I wanted to create a house that could cater for everything," she admits. "I wanted a formal sitting room, as well as a conservatory, which would be a more relaxed area for the family and for entertaining friends. I also wanted a comfortable, informal room for our grandchildren, who range in age from 18 to seven months, so we now have a snug with the television and a big, comfortable sofa to relax on. There is also a bar with a more masculine décor where Angus can relax with his male friends. For the kitchen, I wanted a big, sociable space where we could sit and chat, eat light meals, or drink a glass of wine. And I most definitely needed to do something about the master bedroom," she concludes.

Undaunted by the exacting list of specifications, Tom got to work, using a mood board to illustrate different colour schemes and how a new layout might work. He suggested knocking the tiny kitchen, pantry and utility rooms into one big room incorporating an



island and a study area with a desk. A conservatory was built alongside the kitchen for dining, with a seating area for relaxing with a book, or with friends and family. In the entrance hall, the inner door was removed to open up the space. The most radical plan was reserved for upstairs, where Tom suggested moving the master bedroom to the opposite end of the house, converting two existing bedrooms, two tiny bathrooms, a staircase and landing and a study into one large bedroom suite with a dressing room and en-suite bathroom. The design included opening up the roof to create a wonderful vaulted ceiling.

"When Tom suggested it, I immediately thought, 'What a wonderful idea!' because we'd be able to ▶

As part of the renovations a study, two bedrooms, two bathrooms, a landing and stairs were combined to create the master bedroom. Steel joists that traverse the vaulted ceiling have been clad in oak.



enjoy the fabulous views," recalls Barbara. Once Angus's initial concerns that there might be structural issues were laid to rest by an engineer, he was happy for the interior to be updated and altered.

Barbara admits she could not have achieved the transformation without Tom's input. "He's very clever. He's not pushy, but he always seems to achieve what he wants to. He'd suggest something, and I'd say, 'Oh no, I don't think I'd like that,' but Tom would tell me to trust him, and he'd show me the mood board and it would all come together after all. He can be very persuasive," she laughs. However, there were limits even to Tom's charm. "He did not always get his own way," she adds with a smile. "I gave a definite no to any leopardskin!"

Barbara is delighted with the updated house which is a clever combination of stylish, formal, comfortable and cosy, depending upon which room you happen to be in. "Now that it is all done, Angus loves it as much as I do and agrees that the redesign has worked really well," she adds. Asked to sum up her style, she says: "Our family and friends say I've created something chic, sophisticated – and perhaps a little bit French." She smiles, "I like that." ■

**ABOVE** Angus coordinated the design of the master bedroom's en suite. He wanted a bathroom with a hotel feel, with cool grey marble, a large bath and walk-in shower, and plenty of hidden storage for an uncluttered look.

**RIGHT** In the vaulted guest bedroom, blue and white fabric from Ralph Lauren adds interest to the twin beds, whilst Sealy mattresses provide luxurious comfort to their occupants.

