



Steeped in HISTORY

Nestled in a picturesque Cotswold town, an eighteenth-century malt house has been sympathetically restored to provide both a family home and a thriving bakery

FEATURE & STYLING DILLY ORME
PHOTOGRAPHS DAVID PARMITER



In the inviting sitting room comfortable seating is centred around the log burner from Clearview Stoves. For a similar armchair, try the Fauteuil chair by Oka. The walls are painted in Skimming Stone by Farrow & Ball.



'It felt exciting and romantic to spend the first year of our married life building our first family home together'



ABOVE Soft furnishings in pale blues and taupes subtly layer the scheme in the sitting room. The neutral blinds and curtains are by Just Fabrics in Burford and teamed with plain cushions from Heal's. Victoria's parents brought the Dhurrie rug back from their honeymoon in India.

For bread makers Victoria and Max Abbott it makes perfect poetic sense to live in the aptly named Malthouse in Lechlade, which was built in the eighteenth century for making grain for bread production. The duo now run their blossoming bakery business, Sourdough Revolution, from the property, as well as bringing up their two small children – Margaux, two, and six-month-old Nelson.

"Previously we lived in Cornwall, which is where we met," says Victoria. "We had family connections in Lechlade, as my father grew up in the area and it was where we came to visit my Gran. I'd always loved this part of the country, and Max grew to love it too, so we decided to come and live here in 2010. The location is ideal, as it's nestled in the Gloucestershire countryside whilst still having access to Cheltenham and Oxford."

Max discovered his passion for making sourdough bread whilst working with Rob Broadbent at the

Lynwood & Co cafe in Lechlade. "He started off making around 20 loaves a week for Rob, which quickly grew to 200 a week," Victoria explains. "Realising how popular it was, we decided to make a go of our own business, with one goal, to bring real bread back to the table."

Initially, Victoria and Max rented a small cottage to get a feel for living in the area. Once they had made a definite decision to settle in the area they explored the potential to renovate the barn-style Malthouse, which was part of a rundown stable block. "Before being able to adapt it into a family home we had to wait for planning permission from Cotswold District Council, English Heritage and the local council, which ended up taking two years," says Victoria.

Once planning permission was finally granted, the renovation ran parallel with the couple's wedding plans. Their marriage took place in the church overlooking The Malthouse, with celebrations ▶



ABOVE Victoria and Max had the sage-green cabinetry paint colour mixed to their specification. For a similar colour try Pearl Colour Mid (168) by Little Greene. Hanging baskets from IB Laursen, filled with fruit to create a colourful display, make clever use of the space at the end of the island.

LEFT A Sourdough Revolution loaf sits on a board hand-crafted by Max. The deep sill behind keeps tasty pickles to hand.



The dining table from Burford Garden Company fits snugly into the far end of the long reception room. Sheepskins from Burford Market soften the look, whilst a wire shelf unit from Rockett St George provides handy storage.



‘Our family feels complete and the house is the family home we’d always dreamed of – with absolutely no commute’

RIGHT The eighteenth-century former malthouse has been sympathetically transformed into a family home to suit its original period and the properties in the surrounding area. The exterior paintwork has been painted in Pigeon by Farrow & Ball which blends in beautifully with the golden Cotswold stone.



being held in the garden running down to the river. “It was a crazy time, but in some ways having the two projects running parallel worked well,” says Victoria. “The wedding took place a year before the renovations were finished. Spending our first year of marriage building our first family home together felt exciting and romantic.”

The couple chose to work with local architect Andrew Hackling from APH Associates. “Overall our brief was to create a small family home which, whilst it was effectively a new build, would be sympathetic to the surrounding area,” Victoria says. “The first set of plans had the stairs and bathroom in places that I wasn’t particularly happy with, so I sketched new plans putting them in different places. Andrew then took those ideas and turned them into a reality, resulting in an extra bedroom and a cloakroom. Although the

spaces were smaller, the layout suited us better, particularly the positioning of the windows.”

Thanks to her mother, Victoria has an inherent love of interiors and decorating. “My mum has always had a keen eye for interior design,” she explains. “Her style is classically simple, using a neutral palette then adding interest with understated patterns, and I grew up around that. Added to which my dad is an enthusiastic antiques collector and consultant – who is currently writing a reference book on tea caddies – so he has had a big influence on me too.”

For Victoria, it felt like the house came together organically with a combination of her inherited style and Max’s creativity. “Max is very inventive and loves to knock things together using reclaimed timber and stone,” she says. “For instance, we didn’t have a coffee table, so he made one from ▶

TOP LEFT Natural elements are a strong feature of the decorative touches in the house.

ABOVE LEFT An antique bureau, inherited from Victoria’s father, furnishes a corner of the sitting room, ideal for a spot of quiet correspondence.

ABOVE RIGHT A table made by Max from leftover beams sits in the entrance hall.



some beams that had been taken out of the original building and some leftover Cotswold stone flooring. Then, as we couldn't find a suitable hall table, Max knocked one of those together, too."

Victoria's father had a selection of paintings of Cornwall by John Ambrose that he gave to the couple as a moving in gift and they used these as the basis for the colour scheme throughout the house. Max was also inspired to mix a specific soft blue paint for a console table he secretly made for Victoria for her birthday. Then, using the skills she had learnt from her mother, Victoria added layers of pale furnishings in gentle hues to create a calm, inviting ambience in the sitting room.

The kitchen was high on the list of priorities as Max is passionate about cooking and entertaining, and there were certain things about the design that the couple were both definite about. "We were keen to have granite work surfaces for food preparation," says Victoria, "and we knew we wanted an island ▶

ABOVE Painted in All White by Farrow & Ball, the master bedroom is simple and serene. The sloping ceilings frame the Vispring bed from John Lewis, which is dressed with a pretty embroidered bedspread from The White Company. **LEFT** Nelson's restful nursery is furnished with a cot from Mokee, and an rocking chair Victoria found in a skip and lovingly restored.



ABOVE Margaux's cosy bedroom is embellished with delightful finishing touches, such as the felt rabbit head from Fiona Walker England and the oversized M from Attic. The walls are painted using Blackened by Farrow & Ball, creating a cool backdrop for the pretty pastel hues.

RIGHT Victoria has created a sweet window seat area in Margaux's room, and added Pom Pom bunting from The Tipi and Roman blinds made using Taj fabric from Just Fabrics.

that was both functional and sociable for our friends to sit and chat at whilst meals were being made. Max would have chosen a more industrial oven, but I wanted a Rangemaster as it fits in better with the overall aesthetic of the house."

When it came to planning the layout of the family bathroom, Victoria wanted to make the most of the limited space and designed it so that it had a large built-in unit running the full length of one wall. This unit cleverly incorporates two basins, the loo cistern and hides all the pipework.

Now the house is complete, the couple's favourite rooms are the children's rooms. "We were able to put more direct thought into those, as they evolved later," says Victoria. "When I was pregnant with Margaux, we decorated the nursery, where Nelson is now. But after she was born and I knew she was a girl, it was so exciting to pull out all the stops and create a girl's bedroom in what was previously the spare room, using soft blush pinks and Liberty prints, which I love. Now Nelson has arrived, our family feels complete and it feels like the real family home we'd always dreamed of, with absolutely no commute." ■

