

MAKING MEMORIES

Charlie and Chris Webb have spent years renovating their beautiful period property – which is especially magical during the festive season

DRAWING ROOM Owners Charlie and Chris painstakingly restored the wall panelling. Sofas, ottoman, Neptune. Walls in Slate III, Paint & Paper Library. Patterned cushions, Handmade Rugs. Rug, Oka. Greenery, @thelivinghut.wye

The Christmas season is a major event in the Webb household. As Charlie explains: 'My mum – who is half-American and an artist – absolutely loves "the holidays" and all the crafty creativity that comes with it. When we were growing up, the house would be completely bedecked and we had two themed trees. I've taken up those traditions, and this house lets me really indulge my love for this time of year.'

The period home that Charlie shares with husband Chris and their three children, Alfie, nine, Lily, seven, and Tommy, four, is the perfect backdrop to the twinkling lights, rustic greenery and Christmas trees

that dress almost every elegant room. But Charlie, co-founder of The Greedy Book (thegreedybook.co.uk), is first to admit it's taken many years and lots of hard work and determination to get to this point.

The couple first viewed the Grade II-listed house in a Kent village in 2013. 'It had been empty for about three years and was in a terrible state. I felt it was far too big, and there would be too much to do,' says Charlie. Six months later, the house had still not sold and they returned for another look, with members of Charlie's family in tow. 'It was so strange, but suddenly there was laughter in the house, dogs running around and children playing in the garden. Everything fell into place and I could finally imagine us living here. We didn't do anything to it at all for the first year – just enjoyed getting to know it before renovating.'

When that time came, it was to prove far from easy. 'The house was riddled with rot; we discovered that water was running behind the walls; there were new plumbing, electrics and insulation to install – the list seemed endless,' Charlie explains. 'Luckily, there's a small barn conversion in the garden, which we made our base while the first major renovation took place. It wasn't easy!'

But amid all the hard work, there were exciting finds, too. The original wall panelling in the sitting room was

stripped of thick peach gloss paint; the Georgian shutters at the windows were restored; imposing fireplaces uncovered; a beautiful oak staircase revealed. Not least, a well that would originally have been sited outside, was found. This discovery, given new life with atmospheric lighting and a neat glass cover, is now a unique feature in the new kitchen floor.

This room proved to be the most difficult part of the renovation, demanding an arduous planning process and careful thought. 'I wanted it to be light, but still feel as if it was part of the original house,' she says.

To create the large kitchen and informal dining space the couple envisaged, the room where the old kitchen had been sited was combined with a new extension to one side. One of the most striking features here is the exposed brick wall – this is a

section of the walled gardens that encircle the house, and has been incorporated so the continuous run can be appreciated through a large picture window. 'It's one of my favourite features,' says Charlie.

When it was finally time to make decisions on decor, Charlie admits she was low on energy. 'I needed a supportive wing-woman to push me to be a bit braver,' she adds. She brought her close friend, interior designer Amy Maynard, on board.

'We'd go off to antiques fairs, or discuss the merits of different paint shades. The décor slowly evolved, and at last the house was as I'd imagined it might look all those years ago.'

The comfortable, timeless style perfectly enhances this beautiful old property. 'It's especially lovely in the festive season,' says Charlie. 'I fondly remember the Christmases of my childhood, and I hope our children feel just the same in years to come.'



AT HOME WITH

OWNERS Charlie and Chris Webb live here with their three children.

HOUSE Grade II-listed 16th century, with later additions. It has six bedrooms, five bathrooms, open-plan kitchen, drawing room, formal dining room, wine room, playroom, boot room and cloakroom.



KITCHEN This bright dining area was created by removing an internal wall. An arrangement of pillar candles, ribbons, holly and ivy dress the table. **Dining table,** Neptune. **Chairs,** Habitat. **Artwork,** Steven Melrose





HALLWAY Charlie relaid the floor in this little hall using bricks and tiles that she found around the house. Bespoke console table, Scumble Goose. Table lamp, Nkuku. Hurricane lamps, Habitat

EXTERIOR The imposing Georgian frontage was added to the original 16th-century farmhouse; a common way of 'upgrading' a property to suggest status. Front door in Setting Plaster, Farrow & Ball

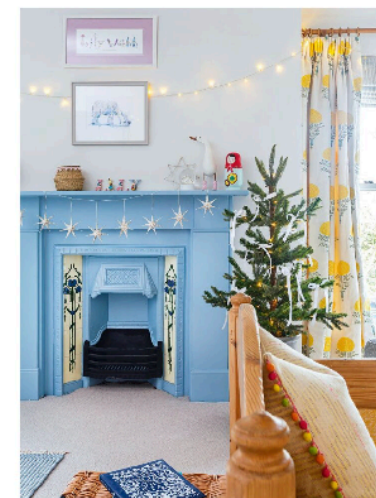


'We've tried to pay homage to the long history of our house, but make it work for the way we live now'

STAIRCASE The impressive staircase had been stained with dark paint long ago, and was gently sandblasted during the renovations to return it to its original glory. Hurricane lamps, The White Company



HALLWAY A festive arrangement sets the scene and creates a warm welcome. The painting is a family heirloom. Painted chest of drawers, Graham & Green. Advent calendar, The Gift Experience



DAUGHTER'S BEDROOM The pretty décor has been kept timeless so that it will remain suitable as seven-year-old Lily grows. The wooden bed is antique. Fireplace in Lulworth Blue, Farrow & Ball



DAUGHTER'S BEDROOM Twinkling lights and a miniature Christmas tree lend a magical touch to Lily's room. Curtains in Marigold block-printed linen; blinds in Bindi block-printed cotton, both Molly Mahon

BATHROOM This cheery bathroom combines pastel-striped wallpaper with warm antique-style brass fittings. The mirror echoes the shape of the jute rug. Wallpaper, Ziggy in Rose, Parker & Jules



BATHROOM This restful bathroom leads off a guest room. The framed maps are from an old book found in a second-hand bookshop. **Bath**, Cast Iron Bath Company; **painted in** Railings, Farrow & Ball

MAIN BEDROOM 'Chris and I slept in every bedroom in the house before we decided this was the one we felt most comfortable in,' Charlie laughs. **Walls in** Steel III, Paint & Paper Library. **Bed, chair,** sofa.com

CHARLIE'S COUNTRY CHRISTMAS

SIMPLE PLEASURES 'At this time of year, foraging in the garden for fresh greenery to dress the house is wonderful.'

FAVOURITE SPOT 'Our favourite beach here in Kent is Sandgate: it has a little hut right where we grab coffee and bacon sarnies, then spend the day swimming and paddleboarding in the summer.'

SHOP AT 'Rising Star (@risingstarkent) in Tenterden is a treasure trove of antiques, one-off interior finds and the most incredible selection of Christmas decorations.'

GO FOR A MEAL AT 'Our friends Kristie and Brad have renovated Boys Hall (boys-hall.com) and opened it as a fabulous restaurant with rooms.'



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