

Colouring in *the past*

The owners of this bijou cottage in historic Rye have given it new life with an impactful decorating scheme and a cheerful combination of family treasures, vintage finds and modern touches

FEATURE SHARON PARSONS PHOTOGRAPHY RICHARD GADSBY



ABOVE LEFT As the front door opens directly into the sitting room, Amy wanted to surprise guests immediately with an interior that made a strong statement. All the walls and woodwork, including the fire surround, cupboards and shelves, are painted in Parsonage Pink from Papers and Paints. The sitting room combines a wonderfully eclectic mix of furnishings and pattern, demonstrating that more can definitely be more, even in a compact space. The plain sofa has been given a boost with cushions in an antique striped linen, and a folklore-inspired vintage throw from HansHandWork on Etsy, while the blue-and-white striped armchair from Hulala Home picks up on the blind in iLiv Woodcote fabric in Delft from Terrys Fabrics. **ABOVE RIGHT** Interior designer Amy Maynard in her dining room.



The black-and-white timbered cottage is tucked down a little passageway leading to a cobbled yard, and framed by equally distinctive red-brick and tile-hung dwellings. This Grade II-listed terraced cottage dates back to the late 16th century, and is sited in the medieval citadel.



Sometimes in life, past and present seem to criss-cross in time, coming together quite unexpectedly. 'When my partner Rupert was a little boy, he used to visit a cousin in Rye who lived in a little house in the centre of the town,' explains interior designer Amy Maynard. 'He loved coming here and remembers being charmed by the house and the higgledy-piggledy little streets: he thought it was like a storybook.'

Fast-forward several decades and one day, in 2023, the couple were idly looking at a property site when a familiar-looking cottage suddenly appeared. 'Rupert recognised it instantly as the house he had visited all those years ago,' Amy says. 'It was one of those serendipitous moments: we'd been looking for a bolthole in Rye, and he immediately knew that this was meant to be.'

The timber-framed cottage is perched in the citadel – this cinque port town's ancient heart – tucked down a narrow passageway, between winding cobbled streets of medieval and Georgian buildings. The town itself is steeped in history – from defending against invasions to becoming a royal shipyard, and not least as a haunt for 18th-century smugglers who used the labyrinth of secretive alleyways and underground tunnels to their advantage. 'It's fascinating to consider what this modest little cottage would have witnessed over the centuries,' says Amy. 'While we don't know its precise history, we often wonder about the people that would have lived under this roof, and what they would have experienced and seen here.'

After moving in, what Amy and Rupert clearly needed to see was how their new home could be transformed into a stylish, comfortable retreat, without detracting from its original charm and character. 'Very little had been done to the place for years,' Amy recalls. 'It was in a time warp with really dated fixtures and fittings, and we knew it was going to require a top-to-toe overhaul to bring it back to life.'

With a trusted builder on site, the six-month renovation began. As in all renovations, certain compromises had to be made. 'The little kitchen was added on at the back of the cottage some 50 years ago,' Amy explains. 'Originally, I intended to turn the adjoining dining room into a big

kitchen, and use this galley space for a table and chairs. However, both practicalities and budget constraints eventually meant we had to abandon that idea. Rather than try to cram too many fittings into the narrow galley – which would have made it even smaller – we deliberately chose a neat run of units on just one side, instead. It's still perfectly functional, but paring back gives the impression of more space.'

The good thing, though, was that as work progressed, many of the cottage's original features were discovered. The fireplace, which had been filled in to accommodate an ugly electric fire, was opened up so that the chimney, once lined, could be used properly again. Upstairs, it was discovered that the original ceiling beams were in good condition, too. 'We decided to keep them exposed – they're such a great feature in this room,' says Amy.

Amy's interior design skills meant she was more than confident to fly in the face of well-trodden decorating rules that decree only light, neutral shades should be adopted in small spaces. 'I wanted to create a sort of cosy impact the moment you walk through the front door,' she says, 'so I persuaded Rupert to go for a warm pink in the sitting room, and a rich terracotta in the main bedroom: we went for extra drama with a freestanding black bath in there, too.'

In contrast, other aspects of the house feature fresh, white walls or cheerful stripes, with a combination of contemporary art and quirky vintage finds adding colour and interest. 'I don't hold with sticking lavishly to a particular style or period,' Amy explains. 'There's nothing to say an antique piece can't work comfortably alongside a modern statement. We often overthink interior design decisions; if the items somehow complement each other – in colour, shape or even texture – just go for it.'

With that ethos in mind, Amy has combined bargain finds with splashes of luxury. 'This area has lots of vintage, antique and reclamation treasure troves,' she says. 'I've also made good use of family heirlooms and pieces that have a sentimental value, such as some of the artwork that was once in our own childhood homes. The cottage feels homely, and I love reflecting on the fact that it belongs to the man who came here as a little boy, all those years ago.' ■

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The sitting room is peppered with eye-catching objets, such as the green apothecary bottles on the mantelpiece, which were found at King John's Nursery in Etchingham. On the shelves to the left is a collection of leather-bound books, a Victorian copper trug, and an antique seal from a solicitors' office.



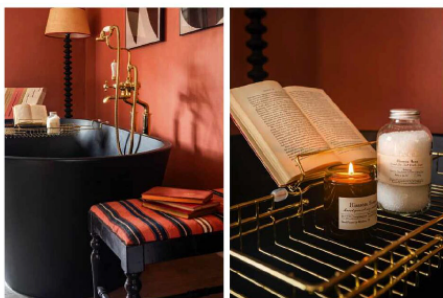
LEFT The dining area is in dramatic contrast to the adjoining sitting room, and follows Amy's ethos that the period of a home need not necessarily dictate its style. The mushroom-shaped table is from Co. Interiors. **ABOVE** The blind is made in Tulip Block in Iron/Indigo by Molly Mahon. The old printer's tray was left by the previous owners and now displays shells. **BELOW LEFT** The kitchen units, which sit below open shelving, are from Howdens. **BELOW RIGHT** The family bathroom is light and fresh, with walls in Pink Ground from Farrow & Ball.



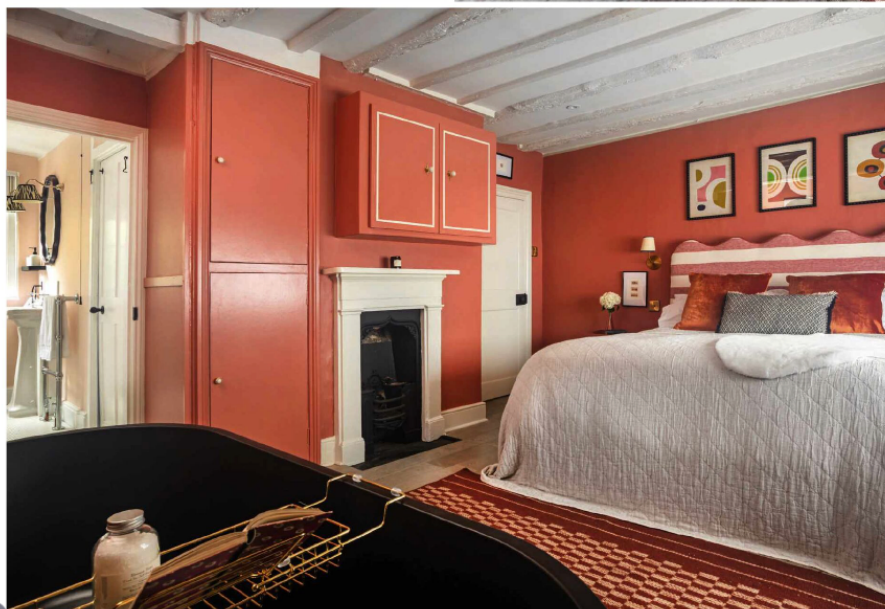
The charming second bedroom features Classic Stripe wallpaper in Soft Blue, from I Love Wallpaper, with woodwork painted in Parma Gray by Farrow & Ball. The bed is from Bobby Rabbit, dressed with a cheerful throw from Sourced by Holly, and cushions from H&M, while the rug came from Sahjad Carpets at Etsy.

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ABOVE LEFT Behind a curtain at one end of the bedroom is a statement freestanding black tub from Victorian Plumbing. **ABOVE RIGHT** The fittings on the bath are from Burlington. **RIGHT** Monochrome artwork makes a bold feature over the bath. Similar abstracts are available from La Redoute. The Ballari upholstered club chair by Voyage Maison came from Wayfair. **BELOW** The main bedroom is a cocoon-like space, thanks to the enveloping warmth of the terracotta colour scheme – Red Earth from Farrow & Ball has been used on both walls and cupboard doors. The television has been concealed inside a simple painted cupboard above the original fireplace and grate. The Squiggle bed is by Comodo Living, and its scalloped headboard has been upholstered in Whitby Terracotta from Warwick Fabrics. Amy used old stamps from her childhood collection to create the framed artwork on both sides of the bed. The white-painted ceiling features original ceiling beams.



GET THE LOOK

IN HARMONY

Confidently mixing antiques with contemporary statement pieces creates a warm and lively interior

COMPILED BY KIRSTY LYONS



1 Classic Stripe wallpaper in Powder Blue, from I Love Wallpaper, £14 per roll, B&Q **2** Parsonage Pink absolute matt emulsion, £63 for 2.5L, Papers and Paints **3** Fenghuang table lamp base in Blue, £395, with Hurley 35cm lampshade in Green and Natural, £125, both Oka **4** French studio pottery candlestick from the 1960s, signed 'Berengere', £75, Tour de Source at The Hoarde **5** Set of 12 Dera framed abstract prints (two shown), multi, £425, Oka **6** Victorian green hexagonal bottles, from £10 to £30 each, Home Barn **7** Vintage printers' tray-style shelving unit in Blue, £42, Caseys Craftbox at Etsy **8** Habitat 60 Larsa pair of solid wood dining chairs in Red (one shown), £160, Habitat **9** Aldwych tall side table in Flax Blue, £593.25, Neptune **10** Suzani embroidered cushion bohemian 12, £106, Nicholas Engert Interiors **11** Petrol Blue wool throw, £79, Country Mouse **12** Quentin upholstered armchair, £259.99, Hulala Home **13** Nomad Taurus rug, from £195, Weaver Green

