

"We just made it!"



With a baby on the way, Sophie and Russell Danby raced against time to create a new home with classic elegance and contemporary charm

FEATURE: JAVIER MUMFORD PHOTOGRAPHY: NICHOLAS YARLEY



- HOME TRUTHS**
- **THE OWNERS** Sophie Danby, co-owner of a catering company, her husband Russell, a senior manager in an investment company, Sophie's children, Billy and Daisy, and the couple's son, Milo, plus Morfy the cat
 - **THEIR HOME** Georgian house
 - **LOCATION** Kent
 - **ROOMS** Hall, sitting room, dining room, kitchen, study, four bedrooms (one en suite), bathroom
 - **PURCHASED** 2007
 - **PREVIOUS PROPERTY** "I owned a semi in East Sussex," says Sophie.

DINING ROOM

The bold paint shade makes a dramatic backdrop to the handsome fireplace. **Paints & Papers** (0202 87644), **Paints** (Paint.com) **Down Pipe estate emulsion**, £26.60 for 2.5 litres, is a close match. Try **London** (020 7314 2100; london.co.uk) for period **fireplaces**. **Reeds** (0445 388 3363; reeds.com) Danby rug, £99, looks similar.



25BH
GEORGIAN HOUSE

SITTING ROOM
Sophie's collector's corner.
Elephant-head round table.
£200, Aidingly Fair
(01434 702326, laet.co.uk)

With a home birth imminent, Sophie and Russell Danby had a frantic search on their hands to find a suitable family house in Kent. Sophie explains how they met the challenge.

Q WHEN YOU AND RUSSELL FIRST MET, WHERE WERE YOU BOTH LIVING?

I was in my own place in East Sussex with my two children, Billy and Daisy, for 10 years when I met Russell. He was a bachelor and was renting a flat in London and making plans to sail around the world. After a whirlwind romance, we changed all that. Before long, we began house hunting when I fell pregnant.

Q HOW DID YOU DECIDE WHERE TO LIVE?

Russell works in London, so we decided to be close enough for him to commute, and also in easy reach of Daisy's college in Sussex. We both liked Kent so that's where we started

looking. Initially, we toyed with the idea of buying a Georgian townhouse, but finding a place with parking space was difficult, so we widened our search. Weeks later, this Georgian property came on the market.

Q WHAT WERE YOUR INITIAL IMPRESSIONS?

We first viewed it on a sunny day in May, when it was looking its best. The location was superb, with a cricket green at the front and a common and woodland beside it. Also, the back of the house was smothered in wisteria. I remember being amazed at the amount of land that surrounded the property and thinking we'd never have to mow the grass.

Q WHAT ATTRACTED YOU TO THE HOUSE WHEN YOU FIRST VIEWED IT?

We loved the original features, such as the shutters and deep skirting boards. The ▶



SITTING ROOM
Period pieces complement the characterful furniture, such as the ornate mirror and elevated marble fireplace.

John Sankey Goya Classic sofa, around £1,600, Danesi (020 8747 8586, danesidirect.co.uk), The Old French Mirror Company (01189 483444, oldfrenchmirrors.com) sells similar mirrors, from £700, Farrow & Ball's (01202 876141, farrow-ball.com) Lime White estate emulsion, £26.50 for 2.5 litres



KITCHEN

Sophie's Aga takes pride of place here.

Dark Blue Aga, around £8,000, Aga (0845 712 6207, aga-web.co.uk). Similar Aga, from £550, Andy Thomas (01422 377314, andythomas.com)





INSPIRATION 'Quirky personal pieces, such as treasured family heirlooms and items from my travels, bring our home to life'

GUEST BEDROOM

Fophie had a classic armchair upholstered in a striking contemporary floral print.
Annexa: 0153, Uxley Road
 (01814 007258, www.annexa.co.uk)
 For similar model boats, Room 475,
 My Model Ships (020 8443 7071,
modelships.co.uk)



BATHROOM
 Glamorous light fittings feature throughout the Danby's house.

Chandelier: £250, Antiques & Fine Furniture (01732 464346). **Bath re-enamelling:** £250, Southern Bath Resurfacing (01892 610303). **Seals:** £55, Aidingly Fall (01636 702326, aaf.co.uk)



DAISY'S BEDROOM

Soft pinks and white-painted furniture are fresh and pretty. For a similar painted wardrobe, around \$800, try French Finds (01535 370052, www.frenchfinds.co.uk). John Lewis (08456 049049, johnlewis.com) has a range of plain and patterned cushions.



MASTER BEDROOM

Shiny varnished floorboards add real character. Extra Durable floor varnish in Walnut, £18.99 for 750gms. Sadolin (0844 770 9998, sadorin.co.uk). **Thow:** £130, Lombak (0670 240 7382, lombok.co.uk)

hallway and landing were spacious, and because Russell is 6ft 2in tall he was instantly taken with the high ceilings.

Q DO YOU AND RUSSELL SHARE SIMILAR DECORATING TASTES?
 Russell's style is quite girly and he was keen to take the house right back to its bare bones. Although I love that look, I find it doesn't quite work for me on a practical level, so we compromised. The layout we have now suits all our needs and it's very versatile, too. There is a real open-plan feel to the living area downstairs, but when we want it to seem cosier, we just close the sitting room doors. I'm a partner in a small catering company, so one of my top priorities was to have a fully equipped kitchen, complete with an Aga.

Q WAS ANY MAJOR INTERIOR BUILDING WORK NEEDED?
 We decided to reconfigure the layout upstairs to give us a second bathroom. This meant rejigging bedroom walls and removing a false ceiling and a large cupboard, which left us enough space for a freestanding bath and a shower. We also created an en suite for our own bedroom.

Q HOW DID YOU PUT YOUR OWN STAMP ON THE PLACE?
 When we moved in, all the walls were in pastel shades of lemon, blue and pink, which was not a scheme that either of us had in mind. My son Billy repainted them all in Farrow & Ball's Lime White. Once we had that as a background, we gradually introduced a palette of subtle greys and tans.

Q WAS THE HOUSE READY IN TIME FOR YOUR HOME BIRTH?
 Six weeks after we moved in, Milo made his appearance. However, I didn't even consider postponing the builders and they just continued working that day as usual. It was an incredibly happy, if rather busy, time. Now, two years on, we're all thrilled to have a home that suits everyone in our extended family. **1**