

Woodchester Cabinet Makers
handmade and hand-painted the
units in Off White 6 by Little
Green Paint Company. They also
made the European oak
worktops and the frame for the
mirror behind the Aga





Room to GROW

With a growing family - including two dogs and three cats - the Bakers decided it was time to look for somewhere a little more accommodating

WORDS BY VICTORIA JENKINS; PHOTOGRAPHY BY WILL GODDARD



Kathryn and Martin Baker wanted to stay in their cottage in a village which they loved and had been in for nearly 11 years. But with two young sons Charlie and Harry, two cocker spaniels and three cats they needed more space. Kathryn had often walked past Orchard House when dog-walking and although it had been for sale for a couple of years she had never viewed it as it seemed to need a great deal of work. “And some people may have been put off by its position, lost at the end of a welter of tiny lanes,” she says. “But we were used to that by then.”

Then when visiting a friend’s house on holiday in Cape Cod the couple were inspired by its space and light and pale wood panelling and thought that perhaps they could achieve the same look with Orchard House. When they came back they found the house was no longer on the market but nonetheless they approached the owners and asked to see round it. “We were 99 per cent certain we wanted to buy it and once we had viewed it we were convinced,” says Kathryn. “It had so much space and the position was lovely.”

Fortunately the owners agreed to a private sale and to wait until the Bakers sold their own property.

Despite its look of an old Cotswold ▶

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Above: Before the couple removed a wall between this and the kitchen this area was the entrance hall leading to the original front door. The clock is from Ikea and the pine table and painted carver chair from Griffins Mill Antiques Emporium while the baroque chairs £187 each are from Scumble Goose



Top: The Great Ormond Street wallpaper in the main bedroom is by Little Green Paint Company and the Coco bed is from The Sleep Room
Above: Guest bedroom - the Bakers took out the built-in louvred wardrobe in the alcove and built a new one with new doors. The pine bed and bedside bookcase are both from Scumble Goosie
Right: The bench in the hallway came from Scumble Goosie in Chalford

cottage the five-bedroom house was actually built in the 1930s with a big extension added in the 1970s, and the décor reflected this with a ‘Mediterranean’ archway, stone-clad fireplaces and the odd orange wall. The couple realised there was a lot of building work too to be done so after buying it in August 2010 they spent the next five months either staying with friends, family or renting cottages - “we lived in eight different places altogether and now wish we’d just rented one,” she says.

One major project was removing three huge chimneys made of extremely heavy concrete blocks before they came through the roof. The roof itself was repaired and a number of walls were taken down and others built.

“We wanted to redesign the layout so that rooms were given different functions,” says Kathryn. “The old kitchen became the entrance hall, the old hall became a breakfast area and the old breakfast area became the kitchen. The original staircase was taken out and a new one of oak built in a different position.”

The concrete floors were lifted and underfloor heating was laid throughout the ground floor then covered with new oak floorboards; upstairs new gas central heating was installed with radiators and a new boiler.

“Nearly all the woodwork had to be replaced with oak,” says Kathryn. “That ▶

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Woodchester Cabinet Makers is a member of The Stroud Valleys Decorative Trail, a group of specialist companies priding themselves on the highest standards of craftsmanship, quality and customer service. In fact, the Bakers used five of the eight companies when fitting out their home.

www.strouddecorativetrail.co.uk



Above: Originally the walls were orange but the couple removed some of the tiles and repainted in Shaded White by Farrow & Ball **Below:** The Bakers moved the front door from the front of the house to the side and added a porch then painted the door in Pigeon by Farrow & Ball and the walls in Bleached Wood by Dulux Trade

means all the windows (bar five at the back of the house) and all the bannisters and skirting boards were renewed. As for the internal doors we replaced them with ones of oak veneer from Travis Perkins.”

The most important room was the new kitchen-diner where they had new handmade and hand painted units installed from Woodchester Cabinet Makers. “There was an old Aga already here but there was a problem with the flue which would have entailed our building a new chimney for it,” says Kathryn. “It was easier to trade it in for a reconditioned one in black with two ovens and then I placed an antique mirror behind it instead of the usual backsplash.” At the dining end a big but ugly stone fireplace was covered over for the couple to create a smaller one.

“We wanted a New England look,” says Kathryn. “We decorated throughout in Farrow & Ball eco-paints choosing light shades such as Churlish Green and French Gray and put tongue and groove panelling into our very large sitting room to make it feel cosier. We also removed another fireplace in here and installed a woodburner in a different position as well as taking out some sliding patio doors and putting in ones which open out.”

She adds: “That Morso woodburner was a really good idea as it gives the room a much needed focus. When we bought the house there was a large fireplace in one



corner which made it difficult to organise the space as it had no flow, so we ripped it out and added the stove in a more central position.”

By Halloween the family were able to move in although living mainly upstairs while work continued below. Then a week before Christmas the kitchen was ready and the Bakers were able to invite friends round for Christmas lunch.

“We wanted a simple, comfortable, uncluttered décor,” says Kathryn.” This house was quite different from our last cottage so we decided to introduce some

more modern aspects to our decor, focusing on joinery with sharp, simple lines. We’ve really enjoyed mixing the old with the new. We’re still adding finishing touches and with each little change we make we love this place more and more.”

She finishes: “We’re really pleased with the way the kitchen turned out, it’s a total transformation. But even the hallway, which we used to hate, was changed into something we love. By using pictures, high book shelves and a rug, it can be relatively simple to change a dull room into something interesting.” ■