

NO PLACE LIKE HOME

RETURNING TO ENGLAND FROM A LIFE IN AUSTRALIA TOOK A LITTLE ADJUSTMENT FOR BOTH THE CUNNINGHAM FAMILY AND THE HOUSE THEY WERE MOVING INTO

FEATURE CATHERINE DORAN | PHOTOGRAPHY TONY TIMMINGTON

TV ROOM

Muted, earthy tones give this space a relaxed feel. Existing sofa recovered in material from the Country Garden range, £98 per m; cushion fabrics, from the Baker Lifestyle collection, all GP & J Baker. Footstool, £875, Outstanding Interiors



When Catherine Cunningham's husband Peter returned to Australia from a trip to the UK and announced that he had found a house to buy, it came as quite a shock. 'We'd left England and had originally only intended to be in Australia for about a year,' Catherine explains. 'After six, however, I was really settled into our life and I'd begun to put down roots. If we'd stayed any longer I don't think we'd ever have come back home.'

Having been offered a new role in his company's London offices, Peter seized the opportunity to scout for property during his return to the capital. With his mother's help, he unearthed a five-bedroom



INSPIRING

HOME TRUTHS

THE PROPERTY

Victorian detached house

LOCATION Surrey

ROOMS Hall, sitting room, kitchen-diner, TV room, study, utility room, five bedrooms (one en suite), bathroom

PURCHASED 2001

PREVIOUS PROPERTY

'Before moving here, we had a Queenslander house in Brisbane, Australia,' says Catherine.



SITTING ROOM

'Having furniture made to fit the space is well worth it,' says Catherine, referring to the dresser built alongside the fireplace.

Coffee table, £895; bespoke cabinet, from £1,200; sofas reupholstered in Hodsoll McKenzie Hopscotch fabric, £2,195, all Outstanding Interiors. Cushion fabrics from a selection at Jane Churchill, from £72 per m



FAVOURITE FEATURE

'I never thought I'd want a contemporary kitchen but the clean lines of these modern units helped this space feel more open'



DINING AREA
Windows, rooflights and a pale palette draw in light. Bespoke extendable table; chairs upholstered in Mulberry Steed Chenille, £520 each; Arne Jacobsen Series 7 chair, £361, all sourced by Outstanding Interiors. Glass pendants, £995 each, Chelsom. Walls painted in Stock Deep and Clay Pale, £35.50 for 2.5 litres, both Little Greene



KITCHEN
The curved lines of the iconic bar stools add a sophisticated touch to the scheme. Cabinetry, refurbished by Roger Sutton, £3,950; Arne Jacobsen Series 7 bar stools, £563 each, all sourced by Outstanding Interiors



STUDY
Catherine designed the box seating herself and covered it in a pretty green fabric. Seat pad upholstered in Marco Check in green, £198 per m; cushions covered in a selection of fabrics from G P & J Baker. Roman blind fabric is discontinued; to create a similar look, try Camille Chartreuse linen mix, £39.50, Romo. Atanea 5 light, £204, Mail Order Lighting

Victorian detached house in Surrey with bags of potential, as well as a suitable school nearby for the couple's children Emily and Matthew. Nevertheless, Peter still had to convince his wife that the place would be suitable. 'He reminded me how long it took us to get used to Australia,' says Catherine, recalling the heat, humidity and exotic wildlife. 'Peter told me that this house might be smaller than what I'd grown used to, but it had a wonderful period feel.'

Moving back to England posed more challenges than simply relocating, however. Accustomed to the open-plan style of properties in Australia, it took a while for the family to readjust to more modest and darker rooms. But once the renovating work got underway, it

wasn't long before they all felt completely at home once more. 'When we installed double doors to open up the space between the old dining room and the kitchen, I felt I could breathe,' says Catherine.

The kitchen is a particularly favoured area, bathed as it is with light from the garden beyond. The couple managed to recreate the warm Australian climate by installing underfloor heating, as suggested by their builder Nick Jones. 'We hadn't really budgeted for it,' says Catherine, 'but we've never regretted the decision to take Nick's advice. Without it the kitchen would have been rather cold, but now there's a lovely ambient heat.' This open-plan room has become the hub of the house where the family come together and Peter can ▶



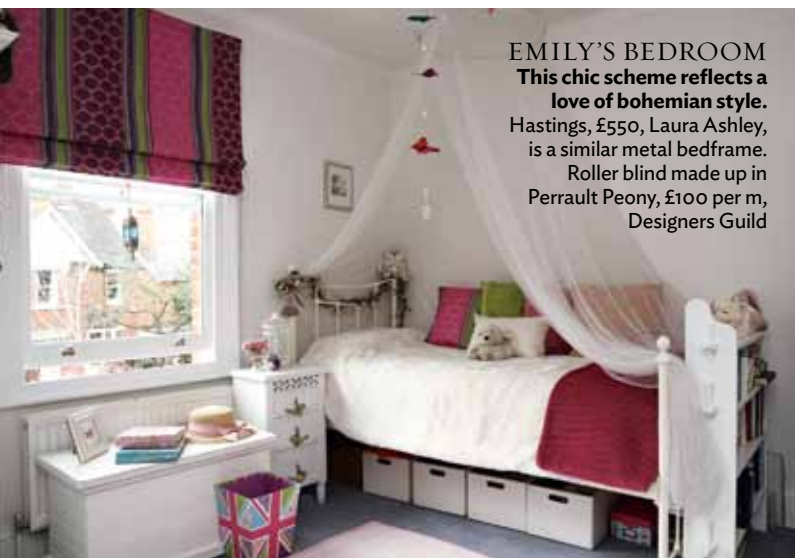
MASTER BEDROOM
 'I like to combine classic and contemporary pieces wherever possible,' says Catherine.
 Iron bed, £600, Time 4 Sleep.
 Birkeland bedside table, £79, Ikea, would not look out of place here.
 Bespoke window seat by Nick Jones of WYE Construction

sit in his favourite spot at the island and read the papers. With help from designer Sarah Shorrocks at Outstanding Interiors, the couple also turned their rarely used breakfast zone into a pre-dinner drinks area. The dining table is on an elevated section nearby, set beneath a rooflight for dramatic effect. 'I love the way the kitchen is split-level; it gives the room a certain character,' says Catherine.

With a gentle sprinkling of house plants, fresh flower arrangements and colourful fabrics, Catherine has created a wonderfully tranquil

environment. 'I find greenery very calming, while flowers bring vibrancy and texture to a scheme,' she enthuses. 'And Sarah's boxes of beautiful fabric swatches are real treasure troves.'

It's clear that the couple have worked hard to dramatically change this house from a dark and dreary place into a stylish home full of light and warmth. 'We have great neighbours and are very close to the river, where we can go for lovely walks,' says Catherine. 'Surely, it doesn't get better than that?' 🍷



EMILY'S BEDROOM
 This chic scheme reflects a love of bohemian style.
 Hastings, £550, Laura Ashley, is a similar metal bedframe.
 Roller blind made up in Perrault Peony, £100 per m, Designers Guild



BATHROOM
 Mosaic border tiles add interest to the neutral decor.
 Fenlands Limestone, Sand and Driftwood mosaic border tiles (21 x 3.4cm), £21.95 each, Fired Earth, are a good alternative