

HOMETOWN GLORY

Returning to the town she grew up in and renovating a beautiful Arts & Crafts house inspired a change of career for print designer Nicola Cliffe



Living room

The existing fireplace was Victorian with a wood surround and tile insets. Nicola replaced it with a more sympathetic design from Chesneys with a surround built to match.



Living room

Nicola loves finding vintage pieces, especially chairs, which she gives a new lease of life with fresh upholstery. **Walls** in Light Gray, Farrow & Ball. Vintage **chair** upholstered in K Stripe, Madder Cutch & Co. Handwoven **cushion**, Alexandra Bissa





Kitchen

The cabinets and island were designed and installed by Jeff Stone to sit under the roof lantern. **Worktops**, Silestone. **Over-island fan**, Elica



AT HOME WITH

Owners Nicola Cliffe, a print designer and founder of Madder Cutch & Co (maddercutchandco.com), and her husband Jonathan, a dentist. They have three grown-up sons, George, Ted and Bertie, and a Parson Russell Terrier called Ernie.

House Five-bedroomed semi-detached Arts & Crafts house built in 1904. They moved in in 2005.

Nicola Cliffe has a soft spot for Arts & Crafts houses and used to love walking past this property in her home town of Stamford, admiring the flower displays on the windowsills. Having moved away in her youth, she returned to the town with her husband Jonathan to bring up their boys George, Ted and Bertie, and this house was on the route to the children’s school where Nicola also worked, teaching science.

‘We lived just down the road in a tiny house and when Bertie came along, we really did need something bigger,’ says Nicola. ‘These houses don’t come on the market often and when they do, they sell very quickly, but we were very lucky - I knew the lady who lived here and she let me know in advance that she was putting it on the market.’

Nicola had been inside the house and knew it still had some Arts & Crafts features, such as the staircase, tiled floors and the fittings in the dining room. She also liked the proportions: ‘The windows say “country house”, but it’s not too big inside - it still feels like a comfortable family home,’ she says.

The house had been altered over time and there was work to do to the kitchen, bathrooms and the configuration of the ground floor rooms, but the priority was to get the boys settled. ‘We moved in in January >



Kitchen-diner
The padded banquette seating injects a cosy touch. **Banquette**, Craftwood in Bournemouth. **Table**, Ennis & Brown. **Timothy Oulton chairs**, Heal's. **Chatsworth oak floor**, Floors of Stone

“IT’S FANTASTIC HAVING THIS SPACE FOR THE FAMILY AT CHRISTMAS. LAST YEAR WE DIDN’T LEAVE THE ROOM ALL DAY”

Exterior

The couple added the orangery-style extension, but found that they didn’t use it in the way they had hoped, so decided to move the kitchen here



Boot room

The glass boot room to the side of the kitchen is great for keeping muddy paws at bay. Nicola refers to it as ‘Ernie’s Room.’ **Floor tiles**, Mandarin Stone

Dining room

The dresser was already in this room and Nicola updated it with a new paint colour. China, from a selection at Deliverance County



Dining room

The dining room feels true to the original house. **Walls** in Purbeck Stone; original **fire surround** in Pavillion Gray, both Farrow & Ball



2005, and George and Ted were up in the attic rooms, which were freezing,' says Nicola. 'There was no insulation and we had to duct-tape the door to the eaves space closed as it kept blowing open.'

The attic was stripped out, insulation added and beams moved to accommodate new dormer windows. One side of the space became a study area and the remainder was divided into two bedrooms.

The ground floor has also benefitted from some structural work. The couple added an orangery extension and rebuilt a wall to return a knocked-through living room to two separate rooms. 'It's nice to have larger spaces where everyone can gather, but it was also good to have the piano separate from the living room, and to have somewhere for the trombone to go, along with all the other instruments the boys were playing at the time,' says Nicola.

One of the biggest unforeseen expenses was replacing the windows at the front as road noise was an issue. 'We kept the original single-glazed little leaded lights in the hallway, but the front ones are all now bronze casement windows,' she says. 'It was an investment, but they don't rust or need painting so they are very low maintenance.'

The room that was trickier to fix than expected was the kitchen. 'It has taken three attempts over the years >

Main bedroom

Interest is added to the calming neutral palette with fabrics inspired by nature. **Blinds** and **curtains**, made by Nicola's friend @kayelizabethinteriors



“THE WINDOWS SAY ‘COUNTRY HOUSE’, BUT IT’S NOT TOO BIG AND SMALLER ROOMS MAKE IT FEEL HOMELY”

Hallway

The desk area is Nicola's favourite spot. **Chair** in Achillea ground large in Burghley Blue, Madder Cutch & Co



Hallway

'I love William Morris and, when we first got the house, I added a bit in every room,' says Nicola. **Blind** in vintage William Morris fabric; for similar, try Fruit, Morris & Co



Bedroom

A wooden pew provides handy seating and doubles as an unusual bedside table. Similar **bench**, Antique Church Furnishings



Bathroom

Dark panelled walls inject drama into the scheme. **Bath and basin**, Imperial Bathrooms. **Panelling** in Down Pipe, Farrow & Ball



to get the kitchen right, adding various extensions and moving it around, but that's how a house develops,' says Nicola. 'We did it over years - we could have moved house three times in that time so I don't fret about it.' The final kitchen rejig saw it move to the orangery, which they had built earlier, and it's now a large, open space.

As the boys have grown up, the couple have adapted the space to suit the changing family dynamic. One of the biggest impacts this house has had on Nicola is the launch of her own textile business, Madder Cutch & Co, creating English prints in natural dyes. 'I went from introducing a bit of William Morris fabric in every room, to going back to college to study for an MA in sustainable textile design,' she says. 'I now work from home in a studio at the back, but I also use the study and Ted's old bedroom is my sewing room,' she says.

Even though they've moved out, the boys come home for Christmas - and now their girlfriends join them. 'Last year it was fantastic having the extra space and large table, I don't think we left the room all day,' says Nicola. Cooking is a family passion, so the Christmas lunch preparations are shared, with Nicola taking on the head chef role. 'We finish with a walk - Ernie needs tiring out,' she says. 'Then it's lots of games and visits from friends. It has become a very social home that has grown with us.'

Bertie's bedroom

Bertie's bed was bought some years back and resprayed black. **Bed**, Chez Soi. **Lampshade**, Madder Cutch & Co



“ I LOVE BEING IN THE TOWN CENTRE AS WE FEEL PART OF THE COMMUNITY, BUT WE'RE SURROUNDED BY COUNTRYSIDE AND GREAT PLACES TO WALK ”



Study

Having a second reception room was a blessing when the boys all lived at home

ON OUR DOORSTEP

Visit... 'Burghley House (burghley.co.uk), a fine Elizabethan manor. The year-round calendar of events includes good Christmas fairs. There is also a Christmas market in the town.'

Shop at... 'Stamford has an impressive range of independent cafes and delis, including The Fine Food Store (finefoodstore.co.uk), No 14 St Mary's Hill (01780 755551) and Cafe Black (01780 762999) with lots of festive food and locally made speciality produce for sale.'

Go for a meal at... 'The Tobie Norris (kneadpubs.co.uk), a former bell foundry from 1280.'