



BOTH PICTURES Complete with a picket fence and climbing roses, the house gives the feeling of being in a country village. The entrance hall continues the look with flagstone floors, freshly cut flowers and a Georgian mahogany chest of drawers

Twice as nice

Interior designer Louise Jones's extended home combines the charm and comfort of English country-cottage style with easy access to the centre of London

TEXT LIZ ELLIOT | PHOTOGRAPHS RACHAEL SMITH

At the end of a quiet cul-de-sac in south-west London, complete with a picket fence, roses and a 27-metre-long walled garden, stands the cottage of interior designer Louise Jones. Sitting in her garden watching her two lurchers nose their way through the flowerbeds, I find it hard to believe that we are only 40 minutes from the West End.

Originally from Lancashire, Louise started working in accountancy, but it was not for her. After 18 months, she enrolled in a year-long course at the Inchbald School of Design and went on to work at Chelsea Textiles, before answering a job advertisement for an accountant at Todhunter Earle. 'My sister suggested it might be a way of getting into the design side of the business, and that's what happened,' Louise says.

After eight instructive years, Louise set up on her own in 2001. Today she leads a team of seven, which oversees six or seven projects at a time from an office on Richmond Common. The Victorian cottage she bought a few years ago is just a short drive away. A two-up, two-down with a lean-to shower, it was previously occupied by a sitting tenant, an old man who had lived there all his life. The company that owned the house had not invested a penny in its upkeep, and although it was in a pretty dire state, Louise could see it had enormous potential. It had been untouched since the Seventies and, as it backed onto the playing fields of an adjoining school, there was enough space to allow any extension to double its footprint.

GPS Architects drew up her plans to create a seamless two-floor extension along one side of the cottage and a single-storey extension clad in wood at the back, which form an L-shape around the house. With the help of builder



ANTICLOCKWISE FROM TOP In the original part of the house, the sitting room has a warm palette, with walls painted in a pale ochre by DKT Artworks and complementary checked curtains from Handicraft Haveli in Jaipur; Louisa inherited much of the furniture, including the eighteenth-century drop-leaf sofa table (bottom left). The kitchen has traditional pine units designed by Louise and made by The Olive Branch Kitchens in West Yorkshire



John Lumsden, the two original ground-floor rooms, each with original chimneypieces, were opened up to form a comfortable sitting room. At the back of this, a door leads to the new kitchen and dining room, and from here you can reach a second sitting room at the back of the house. At the front of the main sitting room, reclaimed double doors open out onto the entrance hall, a cloakroom and a new staircase in the side extension. This leads up to two bedrooms in the original part of the house, and a dressing room and two new bathrooms in the side extension.

In decorating her own home, Louise was determined not to make the interiors look as if she had tried too hard. 'It's essentially a workman's cottage and I wanted it to feel English and a bit country,' she says. She bought pieces that did not look too pristine to give the impression of always having been there. It is a look, she admits, that takes time.

The use of reclaimed floors in the kitchen, the island in scrubbed pine and Minton tiles bought on eBay behind the stove add to the effect. For furniture, she concentrated on the feeling of comfort and continuity. Several pieces were inherited, while the Kingcome and Lawson Wood sofas were old friends that she had re-covered. Some of the lights and fabrics for curtains were bought on holiday in India, and she has selected several of her favourite wallpapers and fabrics from Claremont, Rogers & Goffigon and Tissus d'Hélène – discovered over the years from working on projects – to decorate the rest of the house.

While she is always on the lookout for artwork for her clients, in her own home it is her northern roots that are most evident. 'I spend a lot of time in the Lake District and much of the art is relevant to that area.' She buys regularly from Castlegate House Gallery in Cockermouth, which deals in twentieth-century art, and she is a fan of the Edinburgh artist Louise Kosman.

Not wanting to have her finished house full of mud, she put the garden to rights in her first year of living there. Overgrown and full of leylandii, with a large and broken-down greenhouse and an air raid shelter used by foxes, it took months to clear. Now it has a formal area of flowerbeds enclosed by box hedges with the layout loosening up as it nears the house. 'I had David Austin Roses on speed dial during that first year,' she says. 'It is a wonderful place to return to each night. The street has parties at the drop of a hat and they call my house Downton Abbey!' □

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CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT At the back of the house, there is a second, more informal sitting room, with access to the garden. Bennison Fabrics curtains and a wallpaper from George Spencer Designs decorate the spare room. The main bedroom



Pink rules in the first-floor bathroom; its cast-iron bath and basin were found on the antiques and salvage online directory Salvoweb. Fired Earth tiles surround the bath and pick up the colour notes on the blind and pendant light from Handicraft Haveli. The large gilded mirror is from Guinevere Antiques