

Country colours

KIMBERLEY BELL HAS TRANSFORMED A TRADITIONAL STONE FARMHOUSE WITH A MUTED PALETTE OF NATURAL SHADES AND DRIFTS OF PRETTY FLORALS

AT HOME WITH...

OWNERS Interior designer Kimberley Bell and her husband, Douglas, a potato merchant, have lived here since 2005. They have two daughters, Heidi, six, and Amelia, four
HOUSE A 19th-century stone farmhouse
ROOMS Entrance hall, kitchen/diner, living room, family room, study, four bedrooms, three bathrooms



Somehow practical to bring up children was the main priority for Kimberley and Douglas Bell while they were househunting six years ago with a baby on the way. Their eldest daughter, Heidi, was only three days old when they discovered a recently renovated detached farmhouse that fitted the bill perfectly.

'We had moved to the area from London for Douglas's work and had been living nearby in a beautiful but dilapidated Georgian house for a couple of years,' says Kimberley. 'It was on the seafront and had wonderful views, but it leaked when it rained and the wind blew right through it all the time.'

'I knew I couldn't cope with a major project and a new baby,' says Kimberley, an interior designer, 'so I was immediately attracted by this warm and cosy'

KITCHEN Kimberley designed the units and has combined country florals and a chalky palette for a relaxed feel. **Walls, Clunch; wall units, Bone; island, Hague Blue, all by Farrow & Ball. Curtains, Cow Parsley fabric from Vanessa Arbuthnott. EXTERIOR** The detached farmhouse enjoys beautiful views.



HOW TO... CREATE A BRIGHT KITCHEN

Follow these hints and tips to let in as much light as possible.

- Devoting one wall to folding-sliding doors or adding French windows will maximise daylight. You'll lose wall space for units, so plan in an island unit instead.
- A roof lantern, or even a sliding roof light, is a fine way to light a kitchen extension from above. Try The Rooflight Company

- or conservatory suppliers such as Malbrook and Glass Houses by Jeremy Uglow.
- Paint units in soft white, cream or stone, or try the pastels in The National Trust range from Fired Earth. Add a splash of colour by painting a key piece, such as a dresser or island unit, in a bold shade.
- Don't crowd the walls. Opt for glazed units with internal lighting, and open shelving.



HALLWAY A handy spot for chalking up the week's to-do list. **Bunting**, Cath Kidston. **Blackboard**, Cox & Cox. **LIVING ROOM** An oversized footstool creates a focal point in the elegant scheme. **Cream sofa**, Highly Sprung. **Lilac sofa**, Sofa.com. **Ottoman**, KB Interiors. **Walls**, Smoked Trout by Farrow & Ball. **Mirror**, Decorative Country Living.



house. It was well insulated and was also a blank canvas that I could decorate to my own taste.'

However, after two years Kimberley and Douglas did embark upon a major undertaking – to extend on to the patio at the back and add a family-sized kitchen/dining space. 'We chose an orangery-style kitchen with a generous roof lantern that fills the whole room with light to create a lovely entertaining space,' says Kimberley.

An architect produced a drawing encompassing her own design and the work was completed in three months. Planning permission was granted on condition that the extension was built from stone in keeping with the rest of the house and that it incorporated hardwood sash-style windows and doors. In addition, the roof window frame had to be made from aluminium rather than wood because it is more durable. 'Our only problem was the weather,' says Kimberley. 'Out of eagerness we started the work in October, so rain and snow presented a challenge to the building process.'

When the extension was finished, Kimberley could get down to decorating her new home, indulging her love of soft, calm colours to give the house a tranquil, soothing atmosphere. 'I like building up layers and textures around me,' she says, 'and I prefer things to be slightly mismatched not overly co-ordinated. After all, this is our family home, not a hotel.' Her favourite fabrics include prints from companies such as Kate

WHAT WE LOVE MOST...

'We have magnificent beaches on our doorstep, yet we are surrounded by beautiful countryside'



COUNTRY CLASSIC BUNTING
 To make pretty bunting, cut out fabric triangles with pinking shears and stitch to a length of bias binding tape. For a template visit housetohome.co.uk, or buy bunting ready made from The Cotton Bunting Company.



FEATURE ALISON GIBB PHOTOGRAPHS DOUGLAS GIBB

Forman and Vanessa Arbuthnott, and Kimberley has created contemporary country looks using subtle florals.

Kimberley finds the family tends to enjoy different parts of the house according to the seasons. 'In summer we practically live in the kitchen/diner, but in winter we gather around the fireplaces in the living and family rooms,' she says.

Having handled beautiful fabrics and wallpapers for most of her career, Kimberley felt that creating her own range of linens and tweeds was a natural step for her and she recently launched Peony & Sage – the romantic name inspired by her passion for natural, soft pinks and delicate greens.

Now that the house is more or less finished, Kimberley intends to devote more time to her interior

WHAT MAKES THIS HOUSE A HOME...

'We are in the heart of a wonderful local community'



TERRACE Kimberley has chosen painted furniture for a classic country look. Similar furniture, John Lewis.

On our doorstep... NORTHUMBERLAND

Kimberley and Douglas Bell recommend their favourite local haunts

VISIT... 'Paxton House (01289 386291, paxtonhouse.co.uk) near Berwick-upon-Tweed. It's a beautiful stately home set in wonderful grounds with an adventure playground for children'
SHOP AT... 'The Flower Room (01289 309059, the-flower-room.co.uk)

co.uk) in Berwick-upon-Tweed. The flowers spill out on to the street, and there are gifts and candles inside'

GO FOR A MEAL AT... 'Sunnyhills of Belford Farm Shop (01668 219662, sunnyhillsofbelford.co.uk), Belford. The dishes are prepared using locally sourced foods and suppliers, including eggs laid by its own free-range chickens, and I designed the restaurant's interior'

design business and will probably convert some detached garages in the garden (formerly the dairy buildings on the farm) into a design studio.

The couple's move from London to Northumberland has proved a huge success. 'I met Douglas in London in 2003, but was relieved to find he was a lovely country boy,' says Kimberley. 'We were glad to escape a fast-paced London life – the capital was never really home to either of us.'

'Douglas comes from this area originally, so we are surrounded by family and have found it easy to make friends in the very "village" community. Friends drop in and out all the time and we love that,' she says.

KB Interiors, 01289 388650, kb-interiors.co.uk and Peony & Sage, peonyandsage.com.

HEIDI AND AMELIA'S BEDROOM Feminine with a vintage twist, the girls' bedroom has pretty appeal. **Beds**, similar from Chic Shack. **Vintage eiderdowns and bunting**, Decorative Country Living. **Pink blanket**, Anta. **BEDROOM** The same floral wallpaper brings country freshness to both rooms. **Wallpaper**, Passion Flower by Sanderson. **Bed**, similar from Feather & Black. SEE PAGE 132 FOR PHONE NUMBERS AND WEBSITES