

LIFE IN YOUR
country home



Smallholder's dream

CATHERINE AND SIMON DAVIS OPTED FOR
A TASTE OF THE GOOD LIFE WHEN THEY MOVED
TO A PICTURESQUE EAST ANGLIAN PROPERTY

HOVIS BROWN

COUNTRY CLASSIC VINTAGE SIGNAGE

Use painted wood or pressed metal letters, or choose enamel signs. Look out for signage at fairs such as Ardingly or Newark, or try Pedlars or In the Woodshed.



A love of Norfolk lured Catherine and Simon Davis away from their previous home in Surrey. 'Simon had grown up on a smallholding with ducks and chickens and we wanted that for our children too,' says Catherine.

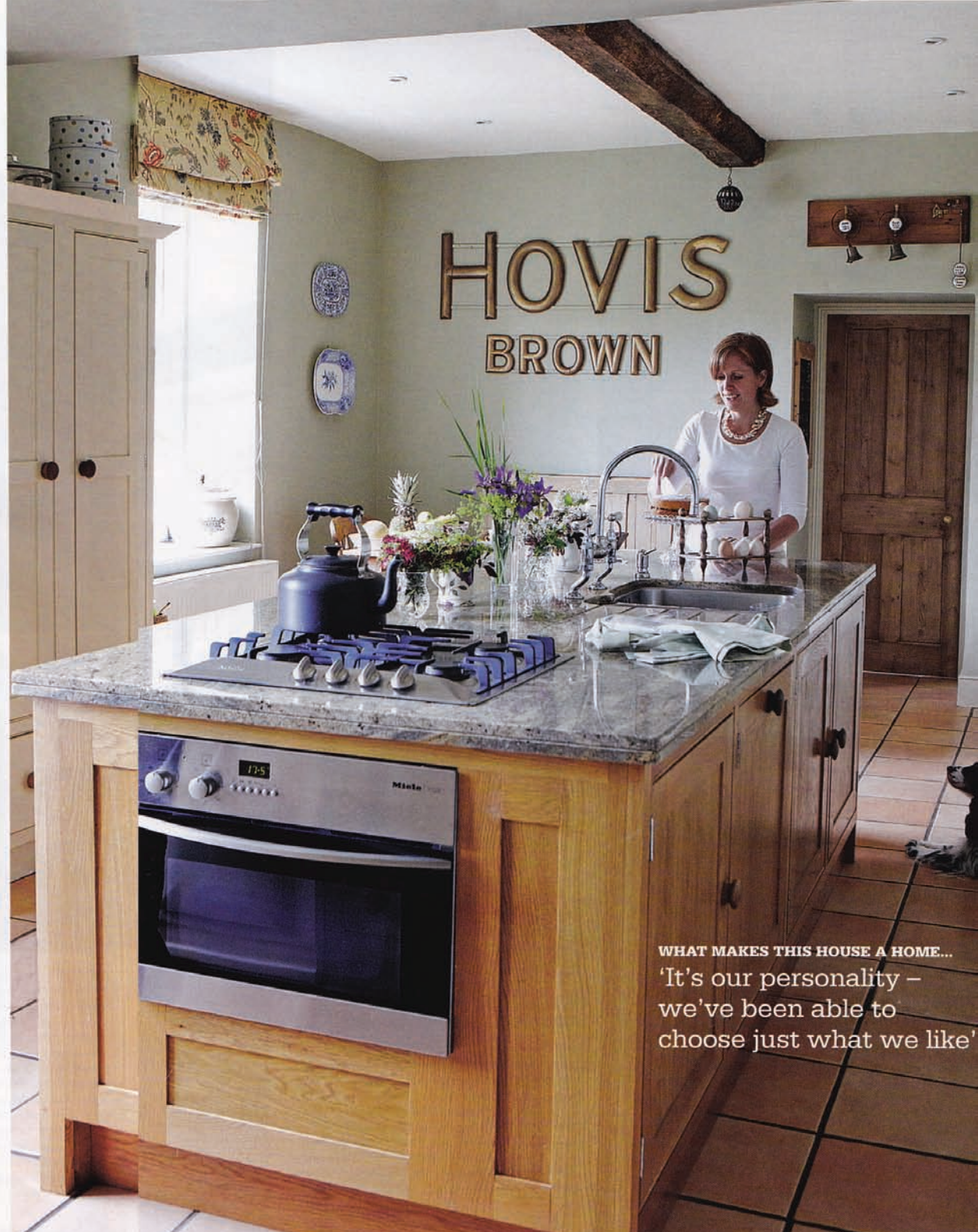
The couple heard about the house and drove for two hours to view it. However, it wasn't love at first sight. 'It was so awful that we drove off after 20 minutes,' says Catherine. 'The interior felt oppressive.'

Their hands were forced, however, when Catherine was offered a job locally and their house in Surrey sold. This left them with two weeks to find a property and so they had a change of heart. 'The house had bags of potential but we had a sinking feeling when we moved in and we thought what have we done?'

The couple were experienced at renovating as they had done up three houses before, but it was undoubtedly their biggest challenge yet. 'Our lowest point was having no bathroom and having to bath in the butler's sink in the scullery,' says Catherine.

The full scale of the renovation gradually became apparent. 'As there were no soakaways, there was water damage in the drawing room. Death watch beetle rampaged under the floor and consequently a friend fell through the floorboards!' says Simon. 'Ben found ▶

KITCHEN The epitome of farmhouse style, the cosy scheme includes quirky elements such as vintage gold letters. The Hovis Brown letters, table, chairs, bench and laundry maid all came from Quill Farm and Country Antiques. Units and island, made by a local carpenter; similar from Martin Moore & Company. Range, similar from Aga. Walls, Ball Green by Farrow & Ball.



WHAT MAKES THIS HOUSE A HOME...
'It's our personality – we've been able to choose just what we like'



mummified rats in the attic and wanted to take them into school for show and tell!

The house was gutted and a new heating system installed. They rewired, removed all the old lead pipes, put in a new kitchen and new bathrooms. The wooden beams were painted black and had to be sandblasted to lighten them. 'The dust went up the chimney and out the fireplaces into the bedrooms,' says Simon. 'There was even grit in the beds.'

They moved from one room to another as each one was renovated and then, after three years working on the house, started work on the cottage and barn.

Catherine was keen to create a classic country look for the interior. 'I love browsing around design shops and often take my inspiration from them. The key to our look is a mix of old and new – we also swap things with our shop, Quill Farm and Country Antiques to create a new look every now and then.'

Now all the work is finished, the family can enjoy the house and surroundings. 'We love it here,' says Catherine. 'We lead the lives we want to lead. We go walking at the coast and it's rural here – we love the slower pace of life.'

📞 To stay at Norfolk Courtyard, call 01362 683333, norfolkcourtyard.co.uk ▶

DRAWING ROOM Fresh shades of green create an all year round spring-like feel. Sofas, similar from Duresta. White painted table, similar from Chic Shack. Walls, Old White by Farrow & Ball. **SITTING ROOM** Cool tones contrast with the beams and brick fireplace. Striped sofas, similar from The Sofa & Chair Company. Painted chest, Quill Farm and Country Antiques. Rug, John Lewis. Walls, for similar try Pale Powder by Farrow & Ball.



On our doorstep...

NORFOLK

Catherine and Simon Davis recommend their favourite local haunts

VISIT... 'The beaches at Holkham (01328 710227, holkham.co.uk/html/beach.html) and Brancaster (01263 740241, nationaltrust.org.uk)'

SHOP AT... 'Quill Farm and Country Antiques (01362 680147, norfolk.courtyard.co.uk/farm_antiques.html)'

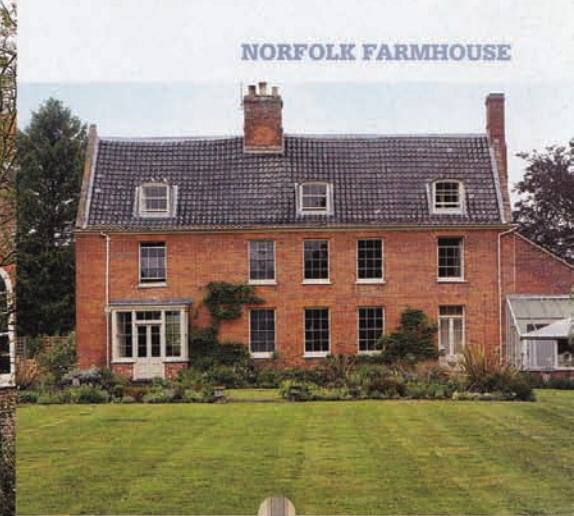
GO FOR A MEAL AT... 'The Hunny Bell (01263 712300, thehunnybell.co.uk) at Hunworth near Holt - it has lovely décor and local country food'



FLORA'S ROOM An oversized headboard and well chosen vintage accessories add elegance. Headboard upholstered in Designers Guild fabric. Quilt, John Lewis. White desk, chair and mirror, all Quill Farm and Country Antiques. Walls, String by Farrow & Ball. Pelmet fabric, Jean Monro. Walls, Lamp Room Gray by Farrow & Ball. **BATHROOM** The beams provide a dramatic backdrop to the roll-top bath. Bath painted in String by Farrow & Ball. Towels,

GreenGate at Berry Red. Chair, Quill Farm and Country Antiques. **LANDING** Muted colours and beamed ceilings provide continuity between the top floor rooms. Table, Quill Farm and Country Antiques. Walls, String by Farrow & Ball. Pelmet fabric, Jean Monro. Walls, Clunch by Farrow & Ball. Chandelier, similar from John Lewis.

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NORFOLK FARMHOUSE

AT HOME WITH...

OWNERS Catherine Davis is an occupational therapist and her husband Simon is an art director and antiques dealer. They also run a b&b and holiday cottage. They live here with their twin daughters Sophie and Flora, 14, and son Benjamin, 12, cocker spaniel Freckles (below), chickens and ducks. They have lived here for seven years **HOUSE** The 17th-century Grade II listed farmhouse has a Georgian façade, with Victorian alterations, plus a barn and stables (the stables were converted into a b&b in 2009) and a Victorian cottage that is rented out as self-catering accommodation **ROOMS** Entrance hall, kitchen, utility, sitting room, study, sun room, dining room, drawing room, six bedrooms, three bathrooms ▶



LEFT Catherine feeds the family's chickens. **THIS PAGE** Catherine, Simon, twins Sophie and Flora and Benjamin (right, with Wonky the duck) outside their Grade II listed farmhouse. The converted stables are used for b&b. Decorative touches such as the enamel sign and pretty dovecote (similar from Birchcraft) complete the country look.

