+The magazine for today's country home

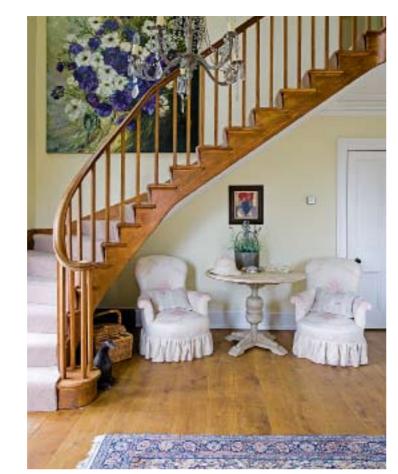
COUNTRY HOMES

& INTERIORS









ENTRANCE HALL Handy seating areas are tucked away. Chairs, Holly Park Interiors. Flower painting, Arabella Johnsen at MacLean Fine Art, Catriona's company.

FAMILY ROOM New England and French vintage styles combine in a comfortable scheme. Console table, Holly Park Interiors. Rug, Maurizio Pellizzoni Design. Coffee table, Pimpernel & Partners. Sofas, Andrew Martin.

'AS SOON AS I CAME UP THE DRIVE and

walked into the hall, I knew this house was meant to be ours,' says Catriona Yates. 'I didn't need to look around. I could even imagine the Christmas tree standing in the hall.'

Catriona knew the area well as she was born nearby and the family have spent holidays locally for many years. 'My husband Roger and his three sons, Max, Jeremy and Robbie, all enjoy golf and with the Royal Dornoch course on the doorstep there is always an opportunity to play,' she says. 'Our daughter Helena also loves it here, particularly the freedom to play outside and ride across the hills or on the many beaches. Although we are based in London, we love it here more and more.'

A holiday home seemed the perfect solution, and, although the house turned out to need lots of work, Catriona threw herself into the challenge. It was entirely her project – Roger did not see the house at all from when they first started the rebuilding until the final cushion was placed. 'He definitely has a hands-off attitude to property renovation!' says Catriona.

For the most part, Catriona project-managed the year-long task long distance. The house was renovated throughout and a new two-storey wing with a kitchen, extra bedrooms and living space was added. The bathrooms were given a facelift, too. And a bell tower was built to visually balance the extension and turret added by previous owners. The new wing feels as if it has always been there. 'It works as an open space, yet is sympathetic to its original form.

'I had an excellent architect, Lachlan Stewart of Anta, and I was very lucky to have help from London-based interior designer Maurizio Pellizzoni to co-ordinate the soft furnishings.' With ▶

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Pendant lights Classic painted ceramic or metal coolie-shape lamps like these (right), hung low over a cooking or eating area, offer a simple charm. Find a selection of pendant lights, including rise-and-fall designs, at Holloways of Ludlow.

Maurizio's help Catriona has managed to create an interior that mixes New England style with French vintage. 'I wanted the family room to be relaxed and a place where we could all unwind,' she says. 'It has a bit of a masculine edge as there are a lot of men in our family and I wanted them to feel comfortable.' Her inspiration for this particular scheme was a cabin in the mountains, complete with lots of Americana. Elsewhere, rooms are more elegant and formal. 'I have taken care to avoid the tartan trap, possibly because I was born and brought up in the Highlands,' she says.

Catriona's family is reaping the benefits of her renovations. 'We love the house now it's finished and thoroughly enjoy the time we spend here. You could not possibly be anywhere but Scotland. Sometimes we do get all the seasons in one day, but when the sun shines it is the best place on earth.' MacLean Fine Art, 020 7589 4384, macleanfineart.com. Anta, 01862 832477, anta.co.uk. Maurizio Pellizzoni Design, 020 8318 9182, mpellizzonidesign.co.uk.

HOWTO... COMMISSION AN INTERIOR DESIGNER

- Take advantage of personal recommendations, or contact at least three who are accredited to an organisation such as the British Institute of Interior Design before deciding who to employ. ■ Ask to see examples of previous work and be sure to follow up references. ■ High-street stores such as
- Laura Ashley and John Lewis also offer design services.
- Collect magazine images or

- samples to explain the look you like and be honest and open about your budget.
- Make sure you're clear about fees and have a written contract. Fees are charged in various ways; sometimes an initial meeting is free, then you pay for a mood board or drawings. When it comes to doing the work, either the designer will offer a complete service or you can employ your own decorators.



KITCHEN New England style links the kitchen with the family dining room. Units, Mark Wilkinson Furniture. Stools, Holly Park Interiors. Lights, Dibor. FAMILY DINING ROOM A French-style table, chairs and chandelier are relaxed yet elegant. Table, Provence & Fils. Chairs, Ann May & Daughter. Cutlery, Oka. Purple glasses, The General Trading Company.

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ON OUR DOORSTEP... SUTHERLAND

Catriona and Roger Yates recommend their favourite local haunts

VISIT... 'Dunrobin Castle (01408 633177, dunrobincastle.co.uk), home of the Dukes of Sutherland. It's set in beautiful grounds. Or explore the local area on horseback with Highlands Unbridled (01408 622789, highlandsunbridled.co.uk)

SHOP AT... 'Butchers Matheson & MacLeod (01863 766343) at Bonar Bridge and Jail Dornoch (01862 810500, jail-dornoch.com) for homewares'

GO FOR A MEAL AT... 'Luigi (01862 810893, luigidornoch.com) in Dornoch. The mussels are out of this world'