

#### KITCHEN-DINER

A dining table is firmly placed at the centre of this kitchen. The mix of duck egg, off-white and wood gives a country feel.

Chichester units, around £8,000, Neptune Classics (01793 881144, neptune.co.uk). Solid-oak floor, £50 per sq m; glass bell hanging lamp, £1,450, both Outstanding Interiors (01932 857543, outstandinginteriors.co.uk)



# AGAINST THE ODDS

Taking on a crumbling house was a risk for Sarah and Michael Shorrocks, but their gamble paid off

FEATURE CATHERINE DORAN PHOTOGRAPHY TONY TIMMINGTON



■ **THE OWNERS** Sarah Shorrocks, an interior designer, her husband Michael, who is a product developer for a giftware company, and their children, Sam, Abigail and William,

plus Fudge the cat

■ **THEIR HOME** Detached house, built around 1900

■ **LOCATION** Surrey

■ **ROOMS** Hall, sitting room, family room, kitchen-diner, study, utility room, five bedrooms (one en suite), dressing room, two bathrooms

■ **PURCHASED** 1993

■ **PREVIOUS PROPERTY** 'We used to live in a three-bedroom neo-Georgian terrace nearby,' says Sarah.

HOME TRUTHS



**HALLWAY**  
Patterned tiles create a traditional look.

Blenheim tiles, £187 per sq m; Telford border, £56.59 per sq m; Original Style (01392 446300, originalstyle.com)



On driving up to Sarah and Michael Shorrocks' Victorian home in Surrey, you would presume it had always been well looked after. In fact,

when the couple first considered buying the house, it was totally run-down. 'We wanted a wreck – and we certainly got one,' Sarah laughs.

Any other buyers might have been tempted to knock the building down and start again from scratch, but Sarah and Michael were keen on reviving what was already there. 'The chimneys needed replacing and there was nothing but the shell, so it was a case of trying to restore what we were left with,' Sarah recalls.

Added to that, there were some disastrous moments. 'When the bricklayer went up on the roof to investigate the chimney, the top started to wobble,' says Sarah. 'The whole thing nearly fell in. Then there was the time I put my hand through the floorboards and found a wasps' nest.'

When the couple moved in, they had a young child and were expecting another baby. As well ▶

## SITTING ROOM

Sarah's collection of candlesticks adds a touch of glamour to the mantelpiece.

For similar candlesticks, try Graham and Green (0845 130 6622, [grahamandgreen.co.uk](http://grahamandgreen.co.uk)), from £16.95. **Fireplace**, £2,300, Woodfords of Weybridge (01932 844487, [woodfordsofweybridge.com](http://woodfordsofweybridge.com)). **Bespoke mirror**, £395, Outstanding Interiors (01932 857543, [outstandinginteriors.co.uk](http://outstandinginteriors.co.uk))

## FAMILY ROOM

Many accessories are from the couple's travels. 'Heirlooms add patina, texture and a sense of history,' says Sarah.

**Gold sunburst mirror**, £299, Outstanding Interiors. **Imogen sofa**, £1,375, Multiyork (01842 764761, [multiyork.co.uk](http://multiyork.co.uk))



**DESIGN ADVICE** 'You need a light colour, a dark colour and a balancing accent colour, which is like a skipping stone – it should bounce at least three times'



as this, Sarah was working full time. As if there wasn't enough pressure, she was also studying for a part-time university diploma course.

Although the property was a shadow of its former self, Sarah and Michael were determined to conserve and restore its original features. They used specialist craftsmen for a range of jobs, including overhauling and re-leading windows, all the heating had to be replumbed, the whole house needed rewiring, and builders were brought in to replace the chimneys and repair the roof. The priority was to get the place watertight. 'It was freezing when we moved in,' says Sarah, 'but once the structural changes were completed, we could start concentrating on the rooms.'

One of the first alterations they made internally was to create a kitchen by combining a couple of small rooms. Although it was an improvement, the dividing wall between the kitchen and the hallway still bothered Sarah. So eventually they knocked the existing breakfast room, kitchen, vestibule and laundry room together to make one large space. Another change that made a vast improvement was the introduction of French windows overlooking a courtyard where there had previously been just a window. 'The kitchen is now my favourite room,' says Sarah. 'It's where we entertain our ▶



**BATHROOM**

This family space has retained its Victorian character.

Edwardian 560 basin, £169; for a comparable bath, try the steel Dynadu double-ended design, £499, both Bathstore (0800 023 2323, bathstore.com)

**MASTER BEDROOM**  
Caramel-coloured wallpaper is complemented and lifted by white and cream accessories.

And So To Bed's (0808 144 4343, andstobed.co.uk) Hardy brass bed, £2,150, is a good match.

Beside tables, for similar, try Cane and Co (01442 232135, caneandco.co.uk), £55. Table lamps, £65, Carlos Remes at Outstanding Interiors (07941 809071, outstandinginteriors.co.uk)

guests and gather as a family. I especially love the island as I can prepare food there while chatting.'

The hall floor was a particular labour of love. 'All the tiles were seconds,' says Sarah. 'They were reject encaustic tiles and took five days to lay. The firm that installed them for us had been putting them aside for about two years.'

As well as being patient Sarah is a firm believer in feng shui. 'A flow of energy, removing obstacles and creating space, is key to good design,' she says, and her vision for their new home reflects this. 'I wanted it to be uplifting,' says Sarah, who also feels strongly about the environment. 'In these straitened times, people should reuse objects and furniture.'

The project has taken a while but for Sarah, this was all part of the fun. Undeterred by the builders' first question, 'Have you any idea what you've taken on?' Sarah answered, 'Probably not!' Her sense of humour is one of the many positive attributes of her personality that must have helped the couple when renovating the building. 'Thank goodness we have a strong enough marriage to survive it,' she jokes. 'This project really was a test of character.' ■