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25 BEAUTIFUL HOMES

Find out how...

25 families created their dream home

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UMBRIAN VILLA to COUNTRY MANOR, WAREHOUSE FLAT and more!



COVER STORY 'We cleared a forest to build our new home' See p44

Particulars

LOCATION

Middlesex

AGE

1780

BUILDING

Grade II listed coach house, a mixture of brick with grey slate and wooden cladding with pantiles

ROOMS

Entrance hall, kitchen, dining room, sitting room, study, 5 bedrooms, 3 bathrooms

MOVED IN

1980



1

2



Love at first sight

When actress Hayley Mills first laid eyes on an unmodernised 18th century coach house, she knew that it was the house for her. Now it's a warm and welcoming family home

1 Hayley enjoys spending time on the balcony outside her bedroom as it overlooks the secluded garden



2 The huge, ornate mirror in the dark green sitting room - formerly the stable - doubles the size of the room

Actress Hayley Mills and her family used to live in a Georgian house overlooking a village green. 'One morning we woke up and all the elm trees round the green had been chopped down, due to Dutch Elm disease. We were staring at the M4 motorway. We'd never seen it before - or even heard it!'

It seemed a good time to move, and Hayley and her husband decided to look for a home nearer their sons' school in Middlesex. They spotted a For Sale sign outside an old coach house, so they crept up the drive to have a look. 'There was no-one about and I looked through the glass Georgian front door, across the black and white tiles in the hall and >



The writer Charles Dickens reputedly spent the night at the inn which the coach house once served

1 The angled wooden ceiling in the dining room is part of the original coach house. The hatch in the corner leads to the kitchen

2 A French carved mirror stands on the original fireplace in Hayley's study

3 The piano in the sitting room is surrounded by film posters and photos

4 The portrait in the hall is of Hayley's father, Sir John Mills, and was painted for a stage play written by her mother in the 1940s



'When you fall in love with a place you don't see these things'




straight through the garden door to the great oak tree at the bottom of the garden. I fell in love with it,' remembers Hayley. Built in 1780, the coach house, which Hayley believes was probably the innkeeper's home as well as the stable block, looks like two different buildings – the front is built from brick and slate while the back has wooden cladding and pantiles. 'It's quite wonky and has all these different facets to it,' she says. One of the first jobs they did on moving in

was to put in central heating to dry out the damp. 'It was terribly cold and I wore my coat all the time. But when you fall in love with a place you don't see these things!' says Hayley. The ceiling in the stable, adjacent to the house and approached from the kitchen, was lowered and panelled, as was the one in the kitchen itself. The fireplaces are original, as are the black and white tiles in the hallway and the painted ceiling in the dining room. 'We really didn't alter much at all,' says

Hayley. 'There wasn't much of a kitchen – the original china sink is now outside, full of flowers, and everything else was freestanding – so we installed one. I haven't done anything structurally. I did think about knocking the wall down between the kitchen and the dining room to make a country kitchen, but I love the shape of the dining room. We use it for everything – working at the table, talking, writing, drawing. It's not just a dining room.' The large, converted stable room makes >

a perfect sitting room and den and has been used by Hayley's son, Crispian, for composing music with his band, Kula Shaker. 'For years musicians have rehearsed in there and no-one is disturbed. The house is detached and we are surrounded by other people's gardens.'

This room also houses the piano. 'We used to have a big squirrel problem, and they lived in the roof above the piano. One day, when Crispian was playing, a little stream of squirrel pee trickled on to the piano keys!'

Hayley's study overlooks the lovely garden and orchard, as does her bedroom. At the back of the house there is a spacious trellised verandah, which is the ideal place for the family to eat and entertain on warm summer days. A hammock is slung between apple trees in the orchard, and the one-acre garden is very tranquil and private. Three pear trees, planted by Queen Victoria's grandchildren Prince Albert, Prince Edward and Princess Mary, take pride of place. 'I believe someone from the royal household once lived here, or maybe a lady-in-waiting,' explains Hayley. 'The trees are all different varieties and thriving.' As is this lovely family home. 

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PHOTOGRAPHY David George



1 The verandah at the back of the house is smothered in jasmine in summer and is an ideal place for outdoor meals

2 The headboard in the main bedroom is actually a folding

dressing mirror. Freckled wallpaper softens the room and cream silk curtains lead out onto the balcony

3 The lovely one-acre garden is the perfect place to relax and unwind

25 Good ideas

This elegant Victorian footstool (UF12) comes from Beaumont & Fletcher (020 7352 5594) in four sizes. The extra large size, shown, costs £595 plus one metre of fabric. You can supply your own material, but this Juno fabric in sea blue costs £48 per m.

