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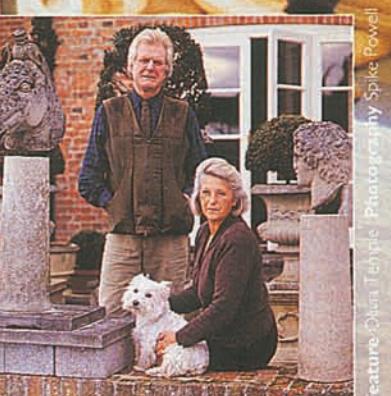
SIMPLY ELEGANT

Rescuing beautiful flags from inches of concrete and opening hidden doorways, the Deacons restored Saltmoor to its original beauty



Main A huge witch's ball from a local antiques market hangs in the centre of the drawing room. When the Deacons arrived at Saltmoor, they painted all the rooms cream, complemented here by black-and-white fabrics from Ian Mankin and Timney Fowler. An enormous Regency mirror has been painted white. 'We'd love to have it gilded, but the estimate for the job was £1,000,' says Elizabeth

Right Crispin and Elizabeth with their dog, Lottie



Feature: Diana Topham Photography: Spike Powell

Essential style



Hand-blown crystal candlestick, 25cm (10in) high, £29.95, Kirker Greer (01621 784647).



Equine sculpture (C2085), 57cm (22 1/2in) high, £187, Chilstone (01892 740866).



Beechwood dining carver with mahogany finish (PGF 3192), £230 excluding fabric, Paul Grant Furniture (0171-729 1543).



Rare double-walled reticulated Staffordshire creamware tea caddy (following page), dated 1771, £3,000, Garry Atkins (0171-727 8737).

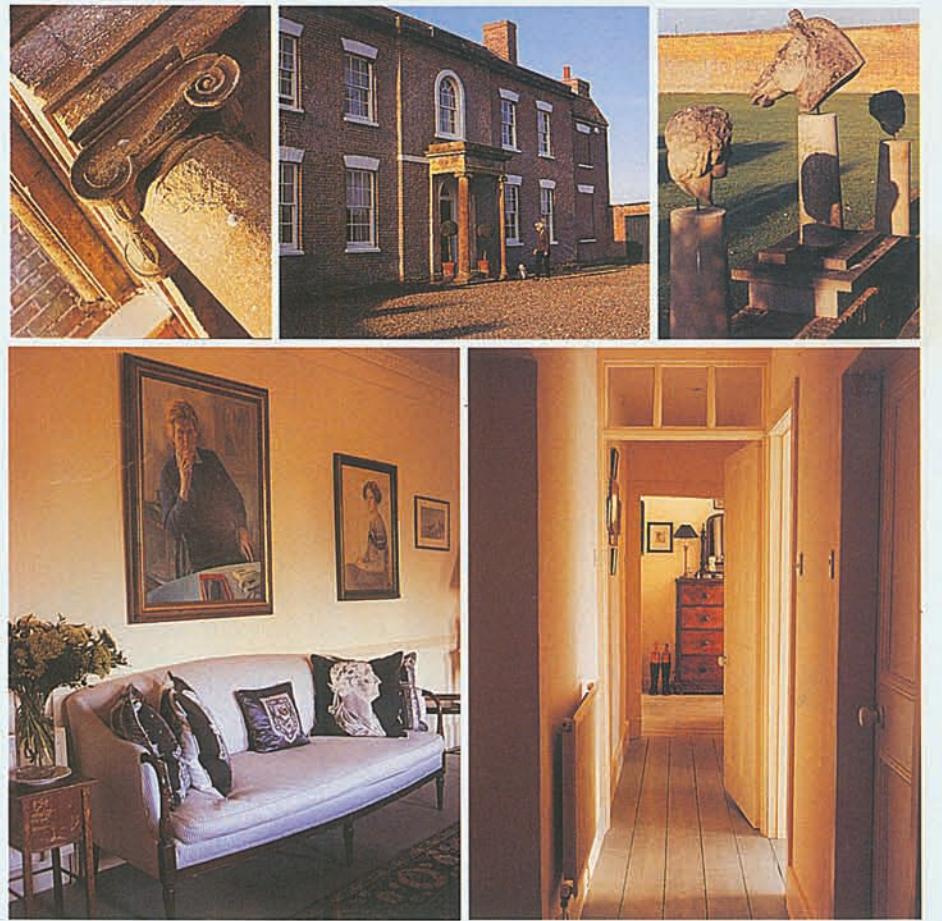


The beautiful glass chandelier creates a sparkling ambience in the dining room. 'We had it unelectrified, and Crispin stuck candles in,' says Elizabeth. The gilded French mirror, bought from an antique shop, is an overmantel mirror from a grand house, though here it stretches from floor to ceiling. The Deacons had plaster moulding made in Bristol to match the moulding in the drawing room

For Elizabeth and Crispin Deacon, it was a case of second time lucky. 'We'd always had our eye on Saltmoor House,' says Elizabeth. 'But when we saw its photo marked "sold" in an estate agent's window, we couldn't believe we'd let it slip by. We were still determined to see inside, though, and badgered the estate agent to let us see it. The place was empty, freezing and smelly. But we still loved it, and, as soon as we heard the sale had fallen through, we immediately made an offer.'

A 17th-century Grade II farmhouse on the banks of the River Parrett in Somerset, the house came with former farm buildings, 12 acres of pasture and a lot to put right. 'It was the symmetry of the

'It was empty, freezing and smelly, but we still loved it'



Clockwise from top left: A curlicued capital; the 'Georgianised' facade of the farmhouse; stone sculptures look out over the smooth lawn of the garden, which Crispin prefers to keep classical; the home's five bedrooms and three bathrooms lead off the long, narrow first-floor landing – through the door at the end is Crispin's dressing room; in the drawing room, an elegant sofa is decorated with cushions featuring classical black-and-white images.

The portrait of Crispin is by his cousin, Peter Morgan

Essential style



Cast polyurethane pediments, headers, keystones and fluted pilasters for classical door surrounds, from £1.97 for a corner block to £8.47 for a keystone, Balmer VI Moulded Architectural Art from Workshop Products (01306 888866).



Madonna (following page). 100% cotton, available in five colourways, £45.50 a metre, Timney Fowler (0171-351 6562).



Traditional pine coat rack with brass hooks, 122cm (48in) long, £68.30, Countrywide Workshops (01550 720414).



1920s Art Deco mirrored splashback (following page), around £150, Walcot Reclamation (01225 444404).



Above To keep the farmhouse character of their home, the Deacons chose a mixture of freestanding furniture and fitted units – which they had made up by a local carpenter. The flagstones are from Classical Flagstones of Bath. **Opposite, clockwise from top left** The china pantry is a converted lavatory; a collection of creamware fills the shelves; the landing by Elizabeth's bathroom; by the back door is a slit window through which farm workers were handed their wages

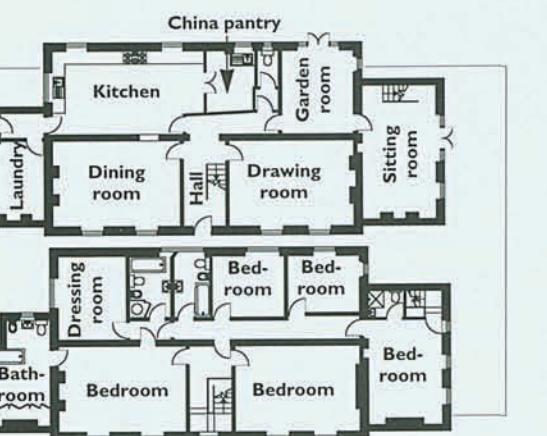
says Elizabeth. 'My room is very feminine with an antique bath on long legs and a collection of angel pictures. Crispin's has a black cast-iron bath with a very masculine 1920s decor.'

Originally, the house extended beyond the present exterior walls. The back is older than the front, a fact revealed by the angle of the main stairs which would have resulted from 'Georgianising' the facade.

Despite the upgrade in style the building had always been a farmhouse, and the Deacons were concerned to keep its character intact. For that reason they painted all walls a workmanlike cream and

chose a black Aga for the kitchen as all old ranges used to be black. The huge pine dresser came from their previous home, but it fitted in well once Elizabeth went to work. 'I stained it blue umber with a Scandinavian wood stain,' she explains. 'It picks up the steely colour of the flags and looks as though it's always been there.'

Some discoveries meant less trouble rather than more. Elizabeth, who is a professional caterer and in summer also runs a B&B, was pleased to find an unexpected route from the kitchen to the dining room. 'We moved an old cupboard and discovered a blocked doorway. We ▶



PORTFOLIO

Crispin and Elizabeth Deacon's farmhouse in Somerset

Built: 17th century, with Georgian facade.

Materials: Bridgwater brick and sandstone.

Location: In the small hamlet of Saltmoor, on a bank of the River Parrett near Burrow Bridge.

Rooms: Kitchen, china pantry, laundry rooms, dining room, hall, drawing room, sitting room, garden room, five bedrooms, dressing room, three bathrooms.





'Crispin's bathroom has a very masculine 1920s decor – mine is very feminine'

had it opened and now I can walk straight through,' she says.

Because they had to spend a lot of money on repairs and restoration, furniture and fabrics came low on the Deacons' list of expenditures. Instead, they've kept things simple. Floorboards upstairs have all been painted pale grey and scattered with old rugs and kelims, while downstairs some of the remaining concrete flooring has been concealed under the same grey paint.

The interior tranquillity is reflected

outside. There, the immaculate high brick wall, undulating at one end, encloses a smooth lawn and no flower beds. Crispin has crown-raised all the trees in the pasture, trimming off lower branches which has given the landscape a French look. 'We've added some hornbeam to a few that were outside the kitchen to make a cluster, and we've planted old urns and pots with box and privet that I can shape on the terrace. We like that serene country look – it's what attracted us to Saltmoor in the first place.' ■

Above left Crispin's bathroom has black and white tiles, a black cast-iron bath, striped blinds and a 1920s-style splash-back behind the sink with a chrome toothbrush-and-mug-holder and a swivelling mirror.

Above right By contrast, Elizabeth's bathroom, which leads off from the bedroom, is more feminine and relaxing. The antique bath was found in a reclamation yard. 'There was an avocado bath on a tiled plinth when we came,' she says

SOURCE BOOK

FABRICS: Ian Mankin (0171-722 0997); Rainbow Textiles (0181-574 1494).

IRON WAX FOR TREATING FLAGSTONES: Lionheart Terracotta Products, Somerset (01823 666213).

RECLAIMED TILES, FLAGS, DOORS, FIREPLACES, BATHS, SINKS AND TAPS: Walcot Reclamation, Bath (01225 444404); Wells Reclamation (01749 677087); Bridgwater Reclamation (01278 424636); Au Temps Perdu, Bristol (0117-929 9143).

BUILDER & CARPENTER: Andrew Sweet, Somerset (01823 442138).

KITCHEN FLAGSTONES FROM: Classical Flagstones of Bath (01225 316759).

PLASTER MOULDING: Hayles and Howe Ornamental Plasterers, Bristol (0117-924 6673).

CATERING FOR PARTIES AND WEDDINGS, ALSO B&B IN THE SUMMER: Elizabeth Deacon (01823 698092).

