

I achieved my dream look on a budget

Charlotte Smith combined quality fabrics with a host of high street finds to keep the costs down while refurbishing her pretty village home



'I love to curl up here and watch TV or read a magazine,' says Charlotte. The heart stools are from Cox & Cox. Charlotte found the sofa on Made, and the knitted pouffe from Asda. The lamp is from Garden Trading, and the yellow striped throw was knitted by Charlotte's mum, Jayne

When Charlotte and Nigel Smith made the big move out of London, they rented a pretty farmhouse in a Leicestershire village while they searched for the perfect place to buy. They were looking for a period property in a village location with the potential to become a family home. But with each house they viewed, the more they realised they'd already found 'the one'. Their rental property, Bramley Farm, ticked all the boxes, so when the opportunity came up to buy it, the couple leapt at the chance to make it their own.

'The house had lots of character and real potential,' says Charlotte. 'And the size of

the kitchen was a big draw. We moved from a flat in London with a tiny kitchen so the thought of being able to put a table and chairs in the kitchen was amazing!'

When the couple first moved to Bramley Farm 10 years ago, they were both travelling into London every day for work so they needed a home which would make the commute feel worthwhile. 'We wanted a property which would feel like a real sanctuary,' says Charlotte. 'Somewhere we'd be really happy to come home to every evening.'

But with damp problems throughout the ground floor, there was a lot to do before interior designer Charlotte could work her



magic with fabric and colour. 'We had to damp-proof and replaster the whole of the downstairs and screed all the floors before laying new oak flooring,' she says. 'A lot of our budget went on boring stuff which you can't even see! So that's why when it came to decorating the house I had to keep a



Good idea!

Buy oil cloth fabric by the metre for a practical table covering – it could work out much cheaper than a ready-made table cloth.

close eye on what I was spending.'

Although the finish throughout the property looks high-end, with stylish touches and beautiful fabrics, Charlotte is a master bargain hunter and picked up many items at high street shops such as Matalan, Ikea and TK Maxx.

'I love a bargain and with young children around I didn't want to be too precious about anything. It's a very relaxed, practical home even though it might not look like it in the photos!'

With a background in interior design and project management, Charlotte was

▲ 'I love the size of the kitchen and the fact that it opens onto the garden. We virtually live in here!' says Charlotte. The stag head table cloth was bought by the metre from eBay. The chairs are Havana Lloyd Loom from Neptune. Charlotte has laid the table with brightly-coloured plates from Anthropologie

well placed to take charge of the top-to-toe refurb of her home and to make carefully thought out decisions about the decorative schemes.

'I get ideas from interiors magazines, boutique hotels and from friends' houses,' says Charlotte. 'Often I have one particular item in mind and everything follows from there. With the formal living room, I was ▶



▲ 'The Vanessa Arbuthnott wallpaper in here gives me pleasure every time I look at it,' says Charlotte. 'It was a really awkward room to decorate but I think it works really well.' The rug was made-to-measure from Alternative Flooring Company. The sideboard TV unit is from Argos, painted in Bone from Farrow & Ball. The leather sofa was bought at Laura Ashley, and the armoire is from Bramley Farm Interiors

COME ON IN...



THE HOME

A four-bedroom farmhouse built around 1750 in Waltham-on-the-Wolds, Leicestershire.

WHO LIVES HERE?

Charlotte Smith, 40, a marketing consultant and interior designer at Bramley Farm Interiors, her husband Nigel, 43, a management consultant, and their children Isla, seven, and Oscar, four.

WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNT?

'Unless you've got a huge pot of money don't be surprised if you're still doing stuff to the house 10 years on. With an old house you never know what you're going to uncover so be prepared that it might be a long-term project.'

TOP TIPS FOR RENOVATING A PERIOD PROPERTY?

'Strip everything back as much as you can. Don't try and paper over the cracks because long-term that doesn't work.'

WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE ROOM?

'The family room with the leather sofas. I love the bold wallpaper and it just feels so cosy. We love to hang out in there as a family.'

DESCRIBE YOUR STYLE

'I'd say it's modern country. I like things to look quite elegant with lots of different textures, while still being practical and usable.'



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Feature Lucy Barwell Photos Rachel & Matthew Barnes

'I moved the furniture around in my bedroom recently and I'm loving this room even more now!' says Charlotte. 'I love my bed which is from Loaf. It's so comfy and looks great.' The lamps are from Homebase. The wallpaper is Birdcage Walk from Nina Campbell



'Don't feel you have to keep hold of old items of furniture if they aren't suited to your space.'

Good idea!

Order curtain and wallpaper samples online. Pin them up in the room of your choice to see how they look before you take the plunge.



▲ 'I picked up the little Lloyd Loom chair at a local market in Melton Mowbray and reupholstered it with some Cath Kidston fabric,' says Charlotte. The fireplace was bought on eBay and painted in Slipper Satin from Farrow & Ball. The sleigh bed is from Feather & Black. The wall-mounted lights were an Ikea find

◁ 'I really keen to use a textured, linen-effect wallpaper so that was my starting point.' Next came a geometric rug from John Lewis, sofas from Sofa.com, a glazed cabinet from Laura Ashley and lamp shades from Dunelm.

For the more relaxed family room, Charlotte was keen to go for a really bold wallpaper, but it took her a while to decide which one to choose. 'I often order fabric and wallpaper samples online and then stick them on the wall and see which one works best. At one point I had five or six different wallpaper samples up on the wall and I was getting everyone who visited to vote for their favourite!'

Like a lot of creative people, Charlotte likes nothing better than having a change around and the house is constantly evolving. 'I must admit I do move the furniture around quite a bit. It can make such a difference!' she says. 'There are some items which have been in every room in the house. It's always worth thinking about using things in different

▼ The wallpaper is called Brighton – a nod to Oscar’s dad Nigel’s favourite football team! The star lamp by the bed is from Great Little Trading Co. The blue bookshelf is from Vertbaudet, and the blue storage suitcase is from Ikea. The rug is from The White Company



ways. And if you're in a home for the long-term, don't feel you have to keep hold of old items of furniture if they aren't suited to your space. If it doesn't work, get rid of it!

The house has adapted to the children's needs as they've grown older. The play room used to be a dining room, but Charlotte soon realised that it was barely

▼ Charlotte found the big wicker basket in an antique shop in Grantham. The Venetian blinds are from Vale Blinds. The flooring is Natural Woods vinyl from Melton Castle Carpets, and the ceiling light is from Homebase

being used and that Isla and Oscar needed more space. And with under-floor heating and a beautiful marble floor having been recently installed in the kitchen, the family don't miss their dining room one bit. Charlotte and Nigel often spend all evening in the cosy corner of their kitchen watching TV.

After all the hard work they've put into their home, it looks like the family will be staying put for many years to come. 'I've found my ideal family home,' says Charlotte. 'It's so cosy in winter, but also lovely in the summer. It feels like such a special house to us because we've become a family here.' **YH**



5 IDEAS TO STEAL

LET THERE BE LIGHT

Industrial-style lighting adds clean lines to the kitchen.

Double Paris light, £165, Garden Trading



PUT YOUR FEET UP

Velvet adds texture and glamour to more formal spaces.

Isla three-seater sofa in Smoke cotton matt velvet, £1,680, sofa.com



COLOUR FIX

This bright, townscape wallpaper adds vibrant pops of colour to a child's bedroom.

Harlequin Brighton wallpaper, £34 per roll, John Lewis

THINK PINK

Perfect bedside storage for keeping all those cuddly toys tidy.

Single stacking storage trunk, £55, Great Little Trading Co.



SEASIDE ART

Freshen up your bathroom with this fun, nautical print.

Beside The Seaside print, £18, Eggcup & Blanket Interiors