

A Christmas tale

What do Lord Nelson, Ralph Lauren and Henry VIII have in common? The intriguing answer is the 16th-century coaching inn that is now Deborah Holden's Surrey home

FEATURE **ALI HEATH** PHOTOGRAPHS **EMMA LEWIS**



THE ESSENTIALS

THE OWNER Deborah Holden, owner of Nest Home & Cafe (nest-home.com), lives here with her two children, Emily (15) and Hugo (12).

THE PROPERTY This Grade II-listed former coaching inn is located in Ripley, Surrey. It dates back to 1537 and is part Tudor with later Georgian extensions. Downstairs there's a large country style kitchen/dining room, family snug, sitting room, large studio, study and cloakroom. Upstairs are four bedrooms and two bathrooms.





FACING PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT
 Deborah, Emily and Hugo with their
 labrador Bella and Jack Russell, Digby; the
 wreath on Deborah's vintage Fiat 500 is
 from Castle Street Flowers in Farnham;
 Deborah has created cushions and
 lampshades using vintage fabrics **THIS PAGE**
 The sofas in the living room were sourced
 from Belgium and the painting above the
 fireplace was found from a junk shop in Rye



The 'Winter Frolic' plate is from Nest. The design is the result of a collaboration between Juliska and renowned ceramic artist, Deborah Sears of Isis Ceramics

Deborah Holden's home is an intriguing warren of nooks and turns, with unexpected details around every corner. Parts of the Grade II-listed property date back to the 16th century but there are Tudor and Georgian extensions, too – so cottage-style beams, carefully restored panelling and low ceilings at the back are juxtaposed with lofty ceilings and elegant sash windows at the front.

Deborah isn't the only one to have fallen for the building's charms. Lord Nelson is believed to have stayed here when it was a coaching inn and it was once owned by Henry VIII. 'It's a prominent house within the village and I love the sense of community, belonging and responsibility that comes with it,' says Deborah. 'I feel a duty to preserve our home with the utmost care and integrity.'

EVERYTHING UNDER ONE ROOF

The family moved in almost five years ago. Deborah had been searching for a family home with adjacent accommodation for her mum and space to launch her own interiors business. This place met all her requirements, with a shop space and an adjoining barn that could be easily converted for her mum. The restoration work was an intense process for the first year. 'We stripped back walls and floors, rewired and replumbed the house and installed new bathroom suites,' says Deborah. ➤

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A CLOSER LOOK *Collecting china*

'My love of china began when I was young,' says Deborah. 'My father, John Gooding, was the original UK importer of Villeroy & Boch. I'm attracted to old and new pieces and my collection is very eclectic. I'm also passionate about Deborah Sears' hand-painted work for Isis Ceramics.'



The kitchen table is from Sunbury Antiques Market, while the cupboard (far left) was found at Fountain Antiques in Honiton



An advent tree adorns a corner of the plum-hued family snug. The advent bags are from Haus Interiors. The sofa is from Highly Sprung and the antique armchair and coffee table were both found in an antiques shop in Devon



'Antiques shouldn't be intimidating. They should bring a sense of character and fun to your home'



The world map wall art in Hugo's bedroom is from Cox & Cox. The vintage desk and toy box came from a dealer in Bournemouth and has been repainted by Deborah

Before starting her own business, Deborah had been a home collection buyer for Ralph Lauren and it's clear that she has a talent for combining colour, texture and pattern. She has created an aesthetic that's both stylish and homely. A palette of greens, reds, burnt oranges and deep purples sit happily alongside faded florals and textured linens. 'I love all things quirky and colourful and our home is full of finds with a sense of warmth and luxury – pieces only make their way in if they are truly loved,' says Deborah. What also adds to the warm atmosphere is the addition of family heirlooms and carefully edited antiques. 'Antiques shouldn't be >

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The high ceilings and fireplace of the master bedroom create a feeling of grandeur. The chest of drawers is an inherited piece and the bed was sourced from Harrods. The beautiful oak mirror is from Tobias and the Angel in Barnes

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serious or intimidating. They should bring a sense of character and fun to your home,' she says. 'I can't resist old fabrics with aged patinas. They make a room feel lived-in and real, like a personality that has developed over time, rich with experience.' Favourite pieces include the various artworks around the house (found at junk shops, fairs and received as gifts) and the wing chair in the snug. 'It belonged to my dad. I had it recovered in a gorgeous Ralph Lauren tartan and it reminds me of him every day,' says Deborah.

FESTIVITIES WITH THE FAMILY

During the festive season, a six-foot tree, from nearby Oxenford Farm, is dressed simply by her children and the house is brought to life with wreaths, garlands, twinkling tea lights and roaring fires. 'With five working fireplaces it's a magical space,' says Deborah. 'On Christmas day we open homemade stockings together in front of the fire and it's a happy blend of excited children and over-exuberant dogs.

'Mum always reads *The Christmas Story* to Emily and Hugo and we enjoy a long and relaxed walk with our dogs, Bella and Digby, before coming back home to prep for a late Christmas lunch. It's a true family affair with everyone helping to dress the table with our favourite china and silverware pieces. The house will always hold a special place for me as it marked the start of fresh beginnings for us all. It's our haven and the perfect place to spend Christmas.' ■



The bathroom suite is from Heritage and the cabinet and chest of drawers sourced from auctions

Get the look



1 'Victoria' double console basin, £769, Heritage Bathrooms 2 'Foxford' armchair, £495, Alison at Home 3 Personalised Christmas sack, £20, Love Hart Design on Etsy 4 Red transferware plate, £26, Ramblers Roost on Etsy 5 Pure lambswool spotted throw, £79, Marks & Spencer 6 'Regal Peacock' teapot, £60, V&A Shop 7 Winter hydrangea wreath, £29.99, The Flower Studio Shop ❖ For stockist information see page 145