

APRIL 2011
\$3.70
US \$5.99
AUS \$6.50
NZ \$12.95

25 Beautiful HOMES

TOWN ■ COUNTRY ■ NEW-BUILDS ■ INTERIORS ■ ADVICE ■ INSPIRATION

STEP INSIDE

Homes with style – from classic to contemporary

- Apartment with a view
- Picturesque watermill
- Magnificent stone barn

WIN
£27,000
OF CASH
PRIZES

REAL-LIFE ROOMS

25 Kitchens

32 Living rooms

25 Bathrooms

DREAMY COUNTRY LOOKS

RURAL LIVING FROM HAMPSHIRE TO NORTH YORKSHIRE



DINING ROOM

Painted furniture fits in beautifully with this soft, creamy scheme.

Wiltshire round extending table, £679; Wiltshire ladder-back chairs, £648 for a set of four, at The Cotswold Company (0844 984 0444).

(at kofoloco.com). Bespoke Tulp pendant light, price on request. Jim Lawrence (01473 826686, jim-lawrence.co.uk). For a comparable two-door sideboard, take a look at the Engleson, \$1,298, Nordic Style (020 7351 1755, nordicstyle.com)

**KITCHEN**

Sarah made her tea towel from a Vanessa Arbuthnott remnant.

Flora & Fauna in fabric and Danson, \$41 per meter, Vanessa Arbuthnott (01295 831437, vanessaarbuthnottfabrics.co.uk).

Culina Civa oak units, Buildbase (01865 870700, buildbase.co.uk), painted in Fawn estate eggshell, £43.50 for 2.5 litres, Farrow & Ball (01202 876141, farrow-ball.com)

Sarah and Paul Norton's thatched cottage in the Hampshire countryside appears so picture-postcard perfect, it is hard to conceive that when the couple and their baby Ella moved in almost six years ago, the 17th-century property felt sad and unloved. 'It was completely lacking in character,' Sarah recalls. 'The house had belonged to a chap who lived in London, and he only used the place as a weekend bolthole.'

Nevertheless, the Nortons had immediately spotted its potential as a family home, with a spacious kitchen-diner, and a large sitting room leading out to a third-of-an-acre mature garden, enclosed by a tiled wall. What the couple could not foresee, however, was the vast amount of money required to restore the fabric of the building. 'We knew it was one of the oldest houses in the village, but didn't realise how great the implications of that would be,' says Sarah.

The pair had been braced for treating the dry rot in the gnarled ceiling beams, and replacing all the windows in accordance with the cottage's Grade II listed status – which required handcrafted frames and hand-blown panes. But they were shocked to discover that the place had been rendered with cement, while inside, 'a previous owner had glued foil straight onto the walls, then papered over it, which meant that the cob panels couldn't breathe,' Sarah explains. 'It was so damp, much of it just fell away.'

Worse was to come when the builder stripped the render from the front of the cottage and a section of wall ▶



Cottage industry

RESTORING A PERIOD HOME PROVED FAR FROM EASY FOR SARAH AND PAUL NORTON – BUT ALL THEIR HARD WORK CLEARLY PAID OFF

FEATURE FAITH ECKERSALL PHOTOGRAPHY NICK CARTER



SITTING ROOM
Sarah's interiors business started with these handmade cushions. Cushions, from £15; curtains in Laura Ashley's (0871 230 2301 lauraashley.com) Villandry in Champagne, £85 per metre. Mimosa voile blinds on far window, £90 per panel, at Sarah Norton Interiors (01264 710333).

sarahnortoninteriors.co.uk. Walls painted in Ringwood Ground estate emulsion, £29.50 for 2.5 litres; woodwork in White Tie estate eggshell, \$43.50 for 2.5 litres, both Farrow & Ball (01202 876141, farrow-ball.com). For a similar coffee table, take a look at the Maharam, \$199, John Lewis (08456 049049, johnlewis.com).



THE OWNERS
Sarah Norton, an interior designer and stylist, her husband Paul, who runs an IT company, and their children Ella and Violet, plus cats Bertie and Flo

THEIR HOME Grade II listed, thatched farmhouse's cottage, dating from the 17th century

LOCATION Hampshire

ROOMS Hall, sitting room, kitchen-diner, landing, utility room, three bedrooms, two bathrooms

PURCHASED 2005

PREVIOUS PROPERTY 'Our last place was a three-bedroom Victorian semi, located in a nearby village,' says Sarah.

HOME TRUTHS