



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE The office doubles as a library space, with custom-built shelving on the back wall. The walls and shelves are painted with Farrow & Ball's Storm. The dining room has a relaxed, grand country-house feel. The boardroom table is from former Labour Party headquarters. "I've had it for 25 years and can't bear to part with it." The sitting room sofa fabric is Eve's Wood, designed by Paula.

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and with no children to leave the house to, they were moved into care, and the house, complete with some odd remnants of its original contents, including some shoes, knickers, cheque books, Mowens from the 1950s – and even an old pair of ballet shoes – was left to fall into disrepair.

Enter Paula and her love of renovation. "I like a challenge, and I felt the house could be restored rather than bulldozed to the ground," explains Paula. "It had such an amazing history and was really a very solidly built house on top of a hill, surrounded by trees. It had a romantic history and I just felt I really wanted to restore it." Despite extensive building repairs – new roof, new joists, new floors, complete rewiring, re-plumbing, re-plastering and so on – Paula could see that the original layout was perfect for family life. With teenagers, dogs and everyone's paraphernalia, there was plenty of room for entertaining and chilling out. "I have teenagers, so the top floor and the back rooms are ideal for them, as they can have their own



space. "With the east – well, when you live in the depths of the countryside, once you have a few people over the house soon fills up."

All that the house needed was some serious TLC, Paula felt. As far as possible, she used the materials they had on site: the original pansters, which had been covered up and were battered and worn, were recovered and repaired with some skilled carpentry to reuse them. The spindles had all gone but Paula was able to get something similar made. The main staircase was restored, and she found a lot of old doors on site.

Only one stone fireplace remained in the house, but using this as a reference point, she set about sourcing similar reclaimed pieces for the other rooms. The only real major reconfiguration of space was the kitchen, which was opened up and fitted with Cromat-style metal doors onto the garden and handmade Shaker-style paneled units that together provide the contrast with a stunning contemporary take on a utilitarian scullery style workspace. ▶

With doors that go out on to the terrace, the living room is popular in the summer, while in the winter, the English stone fireplace keeps the room suitably warm. The two velvet chairs came from an auction. "They were filthy, and I thought I would need to recover them, but I got them cleaned and they came up as new."

