

25 Beautiful HOMES

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to this stunning beachside property

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DID YOU
know...
When Robert Morley bought this house, in 1940, it cost him £300 – and this included 11 acres of land.



Scene stealer

Barbara and Andrew Roberts turned the run-down former home of the late actor Robert Morley into a stunning family abode

Words Tracey Williams Photography Michael Page



Meet the owners...

Barbara Roberts, a sales manager; her husband Andrew, who is a marketing director, and their daughter Eleanor

Previous homes 'In 1995, we bought a four-bedroom, new-build detached property in Berkshire,' says Barbara. 'Then, in 1998, we moved to a 1950s five-bedroom house.'

Current property...

A detached cottage in Berkshire, dating from the 17th century

Rooms Hall, sitting room, kitchen/diner, cinema room, two offices, cloakroom, four bedrooms (two en suite), bathroom

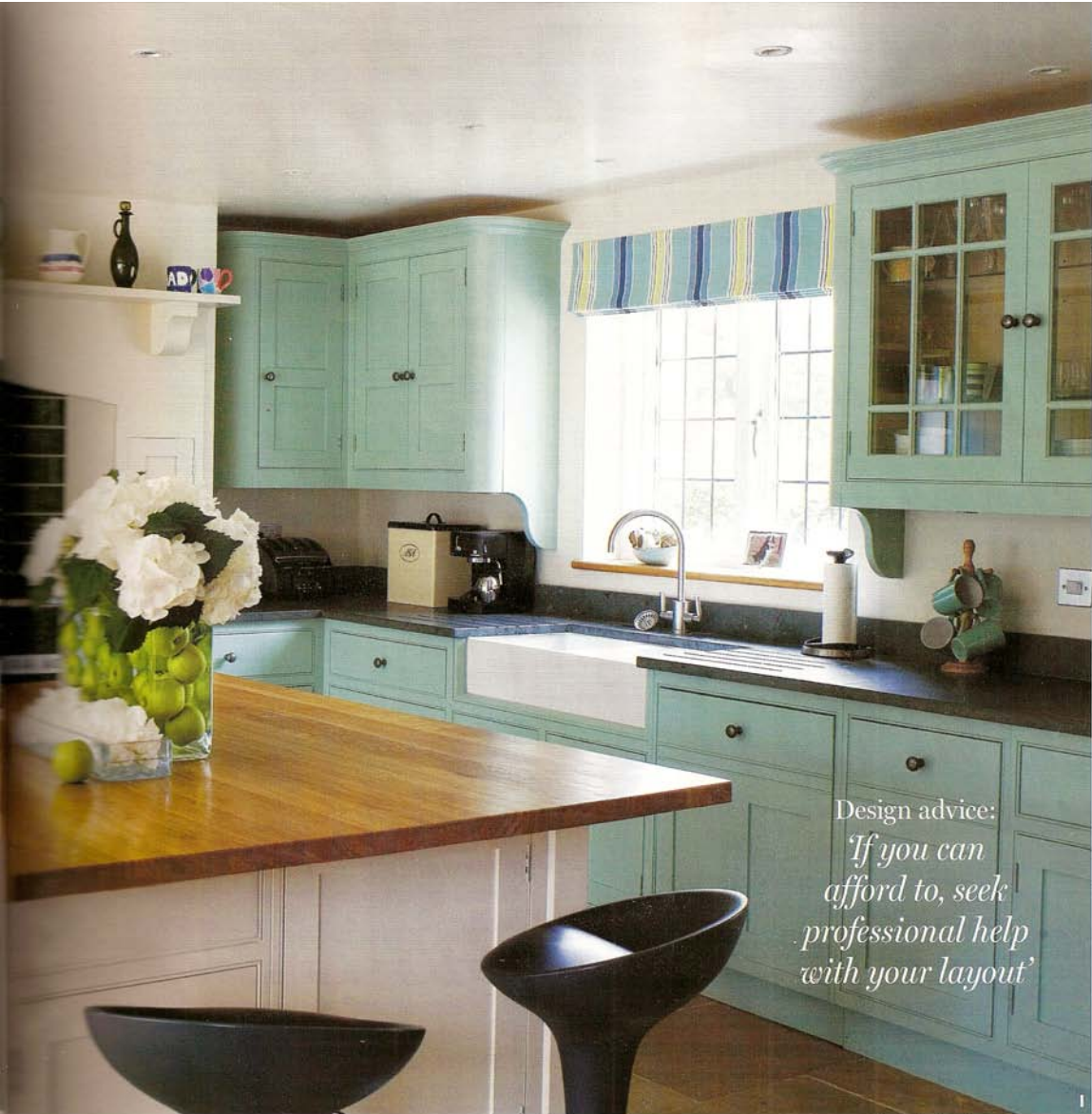
Purchased 2005

Cost £1.1 million

Value £2 million

Ask Barbara and Andrew Roberts how they ended up living in their idyllic cottage in Berkshire and they will tell you it was down to luck. Set in 11 acres, the property had been owned by the late actor and playwright Robert Morley for 50 years. Then, after the death of his widow in 2005, the house came onto the market, desperately in need of repair.

'When our estate agent first sent us the details of this place, the photograph was of such poor quality that we didn't even give



Design advice:
*'If you can
afford to, seek
professional help
with your layout'*

second glance,' recalls Barbara. But soon afterwards, Andrew was riding his motorcycle along a country lane when he spotted the cottage. Unconvinced it was the same property, he called the estate agent, only to be assured it was. 'We were fortunate, as we could have so easily missed out on this house,' he says.

Despite its sorry state, Andrew immediately knew this was the perfect home for his family, although Barbara wasn't convinced. While part of the house is

17th century, most of it dates from the 1800s, and it was obvious that some serious renovation would be necessary. 'That was fine,' says Barbara, 'as long as I didn't have to live here until the majority of the work was finished.' True to her word, she didn't step one foot inside the property until they finally moved in a year later.

At first, there wasn't much of a house to live in, as the couple, their architect and an interior designer set about remodelling the space. 'We really wanted to retain ►

Kitchen The couple used Farrow & Ball's (01202 876141) White Tie on the walls and Green Blue on the units, designed and built by Griggs & Mackay (0118 946 1440). The oak-topped island also serves as a dining area; the Bombo stools by Magis can be sourced from Espacio (020 7637 1932). An Aga (08457 125207) makes a regal focal point

1 & 2 Sitting room

Interior designer Julie Maunder at Cookham Dean (01628 487600) and architect Matt Andrews at The Harris Partnership (0118 950 7700) created a warm, contemporary space with a fireplace from Chesney's (01628 487600) and a George Smith (020 7384 1004) sofa. Striped curtains and cushions in Sahco Hesselin's (020 7352 6168) Umbrella are a contrast to the spotty William Yeoward (020 7349 7828) Fenice fabric on the chair

3 Master bedroom

Silk cushions and a faux-fur throw from House of Fraser (0845 602 1073) conjure up Hollywood glamour

4 Guest bedroom

The headboard is covered in Manuel Canovas's Contini fabric (020 7318 6000)

5 Master en suite

Clay & Glaze (01628 522522) supplied the Valentino wall tiles



Favourite room: 'We love the sitting room because it has views of the garden on all four sides, and it's also so very cosy and welcoming'



the character of the exterior,' says Andrew, 'but the inside needed to reflect 21st-century living.' Nothing was left untouched during the property's transformation, including the plumbing and electrics.

But the project wasn't without its hiccups. After negotiating a lengthy planning battle to move a conservatory, the couple discovered a well beneath the sitting room floor and a damp problem that affected much of the house. However, Andrew remained unperturbed as his team strived to create the family's dream home.

The main objective was to introduce some features inside the house that would

complement its pretty exterior. Certain traditional additions, such as an Art Deco-style fireplace in the sitting room and an Aga, which has been set into an inglenook in the kitchen, exude a classic flavour, yet the latter room's turquoise-painted units contribute a subtle contemporary edge. Throughout the property, the walls were painted in rich creamy tones and soothing pastel blues to create an interior that now feels distinctly warm and welcoming.

Finally, on Boxing Day 2006, the couple were able to move in. 'The designer had been here cleaning before our arrival, so she let us in and showed us around our



3



4



5

own home,' remembers Barbara. Not that the place is finished yet, as more than a year after unpacking, the couple are still regularly visited by the builders.

'The planning problems meant we had to surrender our permitted development rights, so projects we hoped to start at a later date, such as replacing the front gates, are being carried out now,' adds Andrew. Future projects include a swimming pool and a children's zoo - complete with donkeys. 'We wanted to create an idyll here, somewhere that Eleanor will want to come back to when she's older,' he says. 'This dream house for all of us.' ■

Inspired buys

Soft, chalky tones create a perfect background in Barbara and Andrew's home. Add just a hint of subtle colour with these paint shades from Farrow & Ball (01202 876141, farrow-ball.com), all £25 for 2.5 litres of matt emulsion



Cat's Paw



Pavilion Blue



Middleton Pink