

Ideal Home: September 2008

Circulation: 233,630

# 'We hated the house, but loved the location'

Ali and Guy Hearn loathed their 1930s semi when they first saw it, but knew that a few radical changes could make the most of its best asset – the views

✦ For stockist details, turn to page 163

Ali and Guy Hearn transformed this once dismal 1930s house into a modern family home



**H**aving children triggers many couples to make big decisions, and it was no different for Ali and Guy Hearn with the arrival of Will, now six, and Ted, now three. Having lived happily in London for 12 years, Ali began to want a gentler pace of life and a rural spot for her boys to grow up in. **Were you sure you were making the right move?** Yes. I've always wanted to be in the countryside. Whenever Guy and I had weekends away in the

country, I'd almost weep going back into town on the M40. We chose Buckinghamshire, as that's where we're both from, rented out our London house and took a six-month lease on a cottage in Amersham.

**Why did you rent?**

We wanted to get to know the area – and we sussed out the best schools and what we could afford in the catchment areas. If we'd just turned up from London, we might have misjudged places as too rural with no people our own age.

**How did you find your house?**

I saw the property details and dismissed it because it looked so



Once a dark and dingy space, the now open-plan room has been transformed by bi-fold patio doors, which make the most of the amazing panoramic views. The kitchen now leads out to a huge decked area, which looks out over open fields. Bi-fold patio doors, Trend UK. Blinds, The California Shutter and Blind Company

# PRESS CUTTING

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*The big change*  
Creating an open-plan kitchen, dining and family space downstairs and en suite upstairs



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Open shelving is a practical and decorative addition to Ali's kitchen. "I think it's a shame to hide away nice china when it can be a real feature," Ali says.

"We'd run out of money by the time it came to the kitchen, so we bought IKEA units and added an oak worktop," says Ali. Units, IKEA. Clock, John Lewis.

ugly. Then I passed by the house and couldn't believe how beautiful the location was. I knocked on the door and was shown the garden first. I had a tear in my eye, because of the spectacular views! I had a second viewing with Guy and we decided that we'd found our dream location so we'd just have to do something about the house.

#### What state was the house in?

Very dated and dingy, with dark walls and carpets. Above all, the house took no advantage of its greatest asset - the views. It had tiny windows and the only view of the fields was from the loo!

#### So you had plans for big changes?

Yes. We had a structural engineer to advise us, plus a builder. We reworked what was the kitchen, utility and downstairs loo, taking down two walls to create an open-plan



space with room for the large bi-fold patio doors and a dining room and family space within the kitchen area. Upstairs, the loft was already converted so we turned a small fifth bedroom - a bedroom - into an en-suite bathroom for our bedroom.

#### How long did the refurbishment take?

Just six months. We lived in the rented cottage while the work was going on. We had to move in with Guy's parents for the last four weeks as our tenancy ran out and it was hectic as I had to be on site at 7:30am every day and juggle family life, too. <math>\leftarrow</math>

Pretty floral and spotty cake and treat tins add colour to the white scheme. Glasses, John Lewis. Biscuit tins, Treasures and Treats.

The Hearn's created a fabulous family living area in the open-plan space of the new kitchen-diner.

Sofa, rug and footstool, all IKEA. Cushions, Laura Ashley. Pink throw, TK Maxx. Jog, Su Chases.



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1930s semi | DREAM MAKEOVERS

## Take the 60-second tour

**Who lives here** Ali and Guy Hearn, with their sons Will, six, and Ted, three. Guy is a photographer and Ali is a stay-at-home mother.

**The home** A four-bedroom, semi-detached house near Amersham, Buckinghamshire,

bought in November 2006.

**The look** White and open plan, with country-style furniture and accessories.

**Lessons learned** 'If you're relocating, rent in the area first to get to know it before making the big move,' says Ali.

Bought for **£425,000** > Spent around **£60,000** > Now worth **£600,000**

Building & electrics...£26,000	Kitchen.....£5,000
Garden & driveway....£7,000	Flooring & carpentry...£5,000
Bi-fold doors.....£5,000	Shutters.....£4,000
Bathroom.....£8,000	<b>Total.....£60,000</b>

### GROUND FLOOR

The new open-plan kitchen has space for a family area now the utility room and loo are elsewhere. There's also a more formal living room



### SECOND FLOOR

The loft conversion provides the family with a useful fourth bedroom



### FIRST FLOOR

A boxroom became the couple's en suite. The boys' room leads to the playroom



Ali found a warehouse box-style coffee table for the living room. 'It's great for storage - I hung loads of rubbish in there,' she says. Warehouse box-style coffee table, Bohemian Days. Walls painted in White Chiffon, Dulux. Mirrors, Shirley's. Shutters, Shutterly Fabulous

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The poppy painting in the main bedroom was bought on holiday. 'It's perfect, as poppies grow in the field outside,' says Ali. Walls painted in Orchid White, Dulux. Curtains, Laura Ashley. Bed, Feather & Black. Chair, IKEA. Floral storage boxes, John Lewis

## How did you decide on the style of the interior?

I could see that making it more open plan would really bring the house back to life. I also wanted the floors painted white - the carpenter thought I was crackers, having seen my boys, but I knew what I wanted and had even created a mood board. I finished by adding some touches of New England and vintage French style to suit our rural location.

## What's it like living with white with two little ones around?

Amazingly easy, because we've chosen materials that are natural, durable and easy to clean or mend. For example, the kids often cycle about and I don't worry about the floor because it looks better when it's been hashed about and if it gets really damaged, we can repaint it, so it's actually very practical.



'I hadn't found my "perfect" mirror, so I bought two large floor-standing ones. They're my do-for-now mirrors, but I've grown to love them,' says Ali. Mirrors, IKEA

## So crayons aren't banned in your house?

No way! I have loads of tins of paint in the loft ready to paint over any scribbles, but I haven't needed to use them yet!

## What's your advice on going for a white interior?

Choose washable materials - the cream throws on my white sofas get bunged in the washing machine now and then. White is just so versatile and you can change your look easily with rugs and colourful fabrics. @



The couple's old pine wardrobe was painted off-white to match the bedroom scheme. Wardrobe, painted in White Colico, Dulux

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## 1930s semi DREAM MAKEOVERS



A boxroom bedroom was turned into an en suite for the Hearn's bedroom and has a luxurious double shower enclosure. Sanitaryware, shower and taps. Bathstone. Walls painted in Almond White, Dulux. Wall tiles, The Tile Depot.

His and hers basins sit on a tiled washstand unit that was designed by Ali and built by a carpenter.

See more inspiring houses at [www.idealhome.co.uk/homes](http://www.idealhome.co.uk/homes) magazine.



All chose beds that can be adapted as the boys grow, and has kept their room simple, with lots of play space. Beds and duvet covers, Aspace.

PHOTOGRAPHY: JONAS PERSSON. STYLING: SALLY CHERRY. PHOTOGRAPHS: COLIN POOLE. PLANS: PETERDALE.

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## GET THE LOOK | 1930s semi



£25

Fay table lamp (H40cm x 18cm diameter), John Lewis

£18 per m

Rambling Rose cotton, Cath Kidston



£99

Ekorp Fullsta armchair (H78cm x W80cm x D72cm), IKEA



Ali's bedroom  
A white space with pretty touches



£45

Wahair blanket in Fuchsia, Cilliers & Cilliers

£25 for three

Summerhouse storage boxes, Laura Ashley



## Get Ali's look

For where to buy items in this feature, see page 163



£29.99

Streamline bread bin, Strawberry Fool

Ali's kitchen  
Relaxed country style



£4.95

Tea Time metal sign, Dotcomgiftshop



£215

Varde base unit (H90cm x W146cm x D65cm), IKEA

£12

Jug, Laura Ashley



£18 per m

Blue Spot oilcloth, Cath Kidston



STYLING: SALLY COURTS AND BETHANN JONES; PHOTOGRAPHY: TERRY HILL

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