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A HOUSE FOR ALL SEASONS

Needing a bigger home to accommodate her grown-up family, Jacquie Rufus-Isaacs found an eighteenth-century farmhouse in the Cotswolds with versatile living space to provide a comfortable weekend retreat

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OPPOSITE The new wing at the back of the original farmhouse was built on the footprint of old farm buildings about 20 years ago and opens on to a south-facing terrace; Georgie Langton redesigned the garden. THIS PAGE When the new wing was built, the front door was repositioned on its north side; Blanche is one of Jacquie's two Westies



‘The house had to be one that could stretch. Sometimes I might be here on my own, sometimes with my four children and their friends’

LEFT FROM TOP The entrance hall. Looking into the kitchen from the entrance hall: the bench was a junk-shop find. The bookcase in the dining area is painted in ‘Lead’ from Little Greene. THIS PICTURE Two internal walls in the new wing were removed to create an open-plan living area; the kitchen is by Plain English and the painting above the sofa is by Barbara Stuart



LEFT FROM TOP The pergola at one end of the south-facing garden terrace makes the perfect shaded spot for a summer lunch. A bust in the drawing room is of Jacqui's paternal great-grandfather, who was Viceroy of India, and the picture behind it is of her maternal great-grandmother. THIS PICTURE In the drawing room, the doors to the right of the desk open to reveal a capacious drinks cupboard

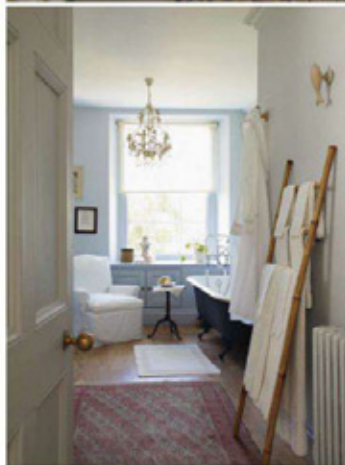
Life moves on and the penthouse in Clerkenwell that was the dream of your twenties is left behind for a garden with space for a swing. Schools, ponics, ageing parents, grandchildren; each era makes new demands, until the quiet bungalow that seemed such a horror begins to have a strange allure.

Jacqui Rufus-Isaacs has no truck with bungalows. Quite the reverse. Her response to four grown-up children, and a first grandchild, has been to buy a bigger house in the country, albeit a smaller one in London. 'For many years, our house in London was our main family home,' she says, 'but now the balance has changed, and the focus of our family life has become weekends and holidays spent together here in the Cotswolds. I have had a house in this area for many years, but it was time to buy somewhere big enough for us all to gather comfortably and without getting on top of one another.'

The search proved long and difficult. 'I probably had too many criteria,' she says. 'I had to be near my mother and I didn't want to be too far from the station, since I am forever going back and forth to pick people up from the train to London.' Nor, she admits, was she prepared to move out of range of Daylesford organic farm, with its mouth-watering farm shop and cafe – 'the mother ship', as she calls it. So much for location; as for the property itself, there had to be stables and grazing for her rescue donkeys, Tuppence and Ruby; and Kevin the mule, who was adopted after he was found in a very neglected state.

When it came to the house, she was looking for flexibility. 'It needed to be an elastic house,' she says, conjuring images of a one-size-fits-all pair of tights. 'Exactly,' she agrees. 'It had to be a house that could stretch. Sometimes I might be here on my own, sometimes with all four children and their friends. If I don't come to the country every weekend I miss seeing my donkeys, but I don't want to be rattling around in a big house if I don't happen to have guests.'

Inevitably, when hunting on home territory, Jacqui was already familiar with the house she went on to buy. This was to her advantage, as she heard on the local grapevine that the owners were thinking of selling and so was able to make an offer before it went on the market. Set well back from the road on the edge of a particularly pretty Cotswold village, the original farmhouse, which dates from the middle of the eighteenth century, had been more than doubled in size some 20 years ago with a wing at the back on the footprint of old farm buildings. The addition gave the house an expansive entrance hall – the front door having been relocated from the middle of the original façade – plus further sitting rooms, a kitchen, and a utility room, and two floors of bedrooms



above. Since this part of the house was not listed, Jacquie got planning permission to knock down internal walls to create an open-plan kitchen, sitting and dining room.

This is to the left of the entrance hall, but as you come in through the front door you can see across the width of the house, through the study to french windows that lead on to the broad, paved, south-facing terrace and lawns beyond. 'In winter, we have log fires and it is very cosy,' says Jacquie. 'But it is also the most lovely house in summer, when we eat outside under the pergola at one end of the terrace.'

On the right of the entrance hall is the drawing room, which spans the front façade. When the house was built, this space was two rooms on either side of a passage leading from the front door to the staircase. The same staircase still winds its way up to the first floor, but now occupies one corner of the spacious new

hall. The old front door has been reinvented as a french window and, like the door from the study, it is propped open in summer on to a second terrace. When here on her own, Jacquie lives in the open-plan kitchen where she can cook, eat and relax on a sofa with her two Westies, Doris and Blanche, at her feet. When she is entertaining, the downstairs swells to include the study, where there is a second television, and the drawing room, with its sofas and armchairs arranged in groups at either end of the room. Bedrooms and bathrooms are similarly expandable, with a top floor that can either be shut off, or opened up to accommodate children and grandchildren.

So much for practicalities, but what about style? For some years Jacquie ran a health and well-being company, Unlisted London, for whom she still works as a consultant. Her real love, though, is painting and she has a studio

in a converted farm building across the lawn, where she can work undisturbed on her vibrant, expressive still lifes. A few recent paintings are propped next to the dining table and the subtle beauty of their colours finds an echo in the decoration of the house. 'I wanted the house to be comfortable above all, and for me colour is very much part of that.' With the help of her friend, decorator Scott Maddux, she has enhanced the house with a slightly unusual palette. In the hall, for example, is Farrow & Ball 'Down Pipe' on woodwork, matched with Paint Library 'Thames Mud' on walls, and Little Greene 'Slaked Lime' on ceilings. Furnishings are equally various and include inherited antiques, junk-shop finds and a selection of paintings from eighteenth-century landscapes to works by living artists such as Barbara Stuart and Ken Howard. Jacquie's eye ensures a harmonious composition □

OPPOSITE CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT A spare room has curtains in 'Bowwood', a classic Colefax and Fowler design. In the main bedroom, the sofa is upholstered in a Lelièvre stripe. The main bathroom. THIS PAGE Jacquie converted the old stables that border the vegetable garden into a studio

