

Exterior
The coach house
was originally built
in the 1850s

AN ELEGANT CHRISTMAS

*Laura and Patrick Butler-Madden's
stylishly eclectic country home is the perfect
setting to celebrate the season*



Living area

The minstrels' gallery is a statement feature in this double-height living space. **Interior design,** Laura Butler-Madden at LBM Design Studio. Crumpet sofas, Loaf

DORSET COACH HOUSE

Dining area

Laura has used textured wood and greenery to cosy up this high-ceilinged space. Similar **dining table**, Neptune. Hans Wegner wishbone **dining chairs**, The Conran Shop





Kitchen
Original cornicing and an Aga counterbalance the modern cabinetry.
Kitchen, Roundhouse.
Aga, Aga Living



Pantry
Open shelving makes it easy to see what you're low on. Similar cork storage **jars**, Ikea

This elegant Dorset dwelling wasn't always the epitome of country sophistication that it is today. Originally built as a coach house in the 1850s, the property was later converted into flats during the Seventies and hadn't been updated since. 'I was trawling a property website one day when I spotted this unique building,' says Laura Butler-Madden. 'It was rather in need of love, but we decided to take a look.'

She and her husband Patrick were living in London at the time but that wasn't a barrier - Laura grew up in Dorset and Patrick went to school there, so the couple had often talked about moving back there one day. Plus, if first impressions were true, they knew the building had lots of potential. 'We were both inspired by the huge central area that had once been the stables,' says Laura. 'When we saw it, that was it. All of a sudden, we could see ourselves creating something exceptional here. Making a space open plan isn't as easy to accomplish in a country home as it is in a townhouse, but we knew that having this incredibly large room would make the process far simpler.'

Laura and Patrick had already renovated several properties together and decided to buy the coach house, although it would be by far the largest project they'd tackled. 'This was the first big country house that I had >



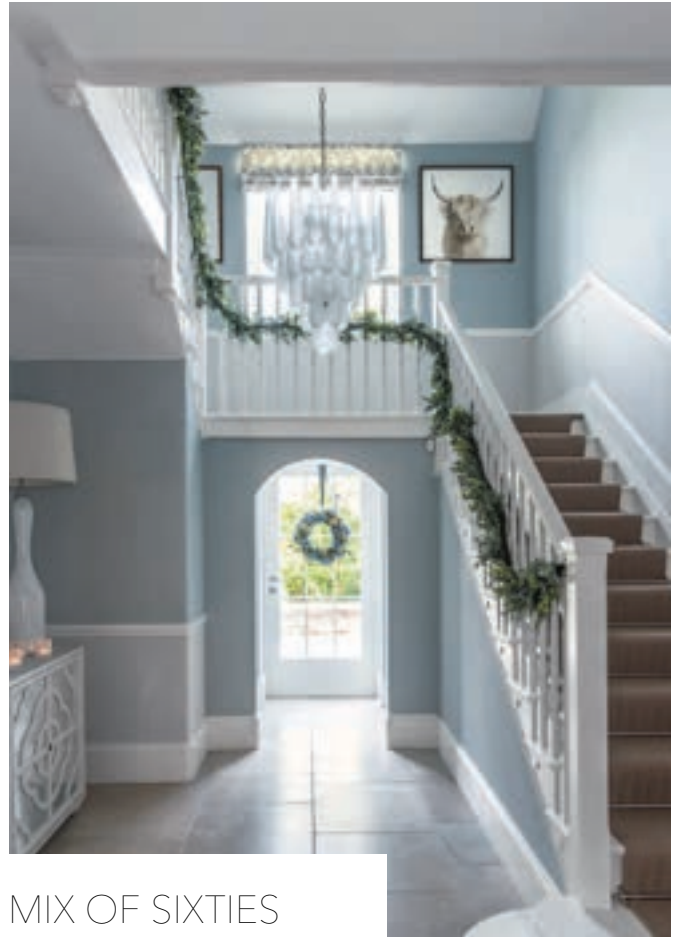
AT HOME WITH...

Owners Interior designer and blogger Laura Butler-Madden and her husband Patrick, a photographer, lived here with their 18-month-old daughter Lily and two Maltese terriers, Coco and Lola.

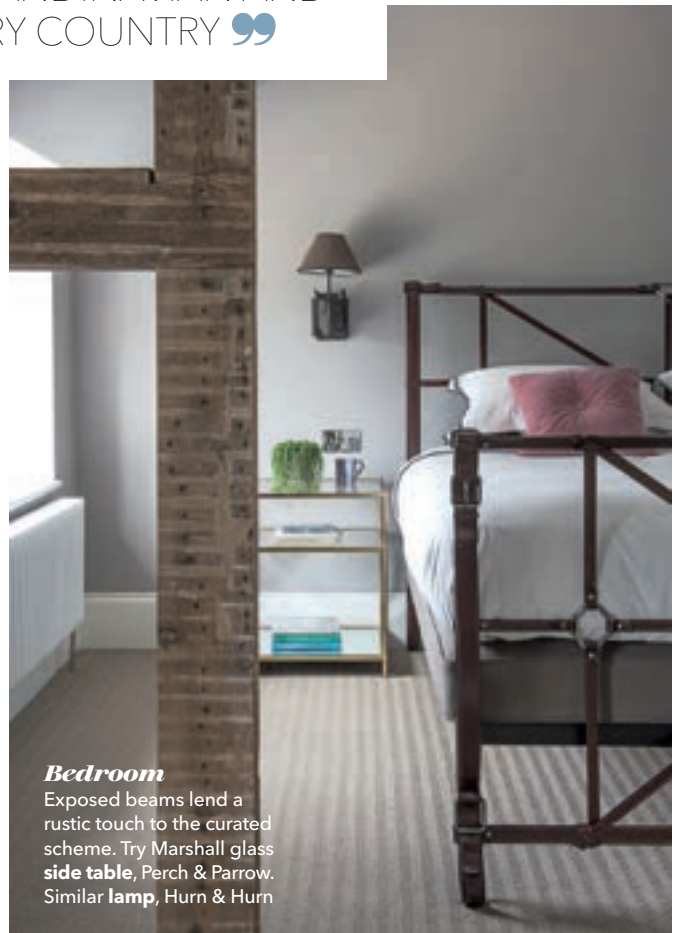
House A converted Victorian coach house, built in the 1850s.

Entrance hall

This elegant space was once a stable block. Large round **mirror**, Perch & Parrow. **Anna cabinet**, Julian Chichester



“MY STYLE IS A MIX OF SIXTIES PALM SPRINGS, SCANDINAVIAN AND CONTEMPORARY COUNTRY”



Bedroom

Exposed beams lend a rustic touch to the curated scheme. Try Marshall glass **side table**, Perch & Parrow. Similar **lamp**, Hurn & Hurn

DORSET COACH HOUSE

Main bedroom

Be brave with patterned wallpaper in large rooms. Contemporary Restyled Palm wallpaper, Cole & Son



designed and it was an unusual building, so it was definitely challenging,' says Laura. 'The fact that it wasn't a classic country home, however, gave us a greater degree of freedom to create the style we wanted.'

The proportions of the rooms were grand, square and symmetrical, so Laura's main aim was to add character to the space. She and Patrick achieved this by opening up stud walls in some of the bedrooms to reveal the beautiful old beams, adding features and visual interest to the upstairs rooms. Laura was careful to avoid an overly utilitarian look in the kitchen and instead went for glamorous marble worktops, as well as retaining the high ceilings and original elaborate cornicing. The couple also wanted a pantry, but decided not to knock out any walls. 'The kitchen was quite large enough already, so we created a pantry in the small back hall instead,' she says.

A long list of building works ensued, as the house needed replumbing and rewiring throughout. The roof was also replaced and new windows and underfloor heating were installed. Laura then began designing the decor. 'I was aiming to create a sense of elegance with the decoration,' she says. 'My style is a mix of Sixties Palm Springs, Scandinavian and contemporary country, with the occasional touch of Art Deco. I wanted a calming palette and mostly used gentle colours.' Laura also worked in lots of natural materials and textures, such as wood and >

ON OUR DOORSTEP

Visit... 'Stourhead house and gardens (nationaltrust.org.uk/stourhead) is one of my favourite places to walk. We love exploring the landscaped gardens, follies and temples. The Christmas at Stourhead event (29 November - 30 December) makes for a lovely festive day out.'

Shop at... 'I love Bridport Antiques market (bridportandwestbay.co.uk), especially at Christmas. I am also a huge fan of auctions. Henry Dukes in Dorchester (dukes-auctions.com) is my favourite.'

Go for a meal at... 'The Anchor Inn, Seatown (theanchorinnseatown.co.uk) is our favourite place to unwind after a stroll on the beach at Eype. The head chef, Cameron Farquharson, is incredibly talented in conjuring up dishes using the region's fish, shellfish, game, farm meats and artisanal foods. There's also a Christmas menu.'

DORSET COACH HOUSE



Bathroom
It's the little touches, such as the radio, that make Laura's bathroom extra special. **Radio**, Roberts



Bathroom
Period-style fittings bring instant country warmth to a scheme. Similar **basin**, Victorian Plumbing. **Cabinet**, try Vinterior

marble, and brought in some quirky, characterful artwork and pieces of furniture to give the scheme real personality.

With the building works complete, the coach house was the perfect venue for Laura and Patrick to host their extended family Christmas celebrations. 'The kitchen and living area is a huge space and it really comes into its own at Christmas,' says Laura. 'There's plenty of room for a large Christmas tree and everyone - parents, aunts, uncles, cousins and friends - to get together for drinks and sit down for Christmas dinner. We usually go for a long walk and eat our meal later on in the afternoon. I like to cook traditional festive fare - turkey with all the trimmings, washed down with plenty of champagne. Patrick's parents live in Spain, so they always bring a leg of ham and Spanish wines with them, which adds a dash of Mediterranean flavour to the party.'

But this Christmas, the Butler-Madden family are celebrating in a new country home. After transforming the house so beautifully, Laura and Patrick were keen to embrace a new decorating challenge and are currently working on their new property in Oxfordshire. 'We loved celebrating Christmas in our Dorset home,' says Laura. 'And hope the new owners will enjoy their first festive season here as much as we did. It really is the perfect house for Christmas.' To take a peek at their new house, follow Laura on Instagram @laurabuttermadden.

LIVING THE DREAM

As an interior designer, Laura has the opportunity to try out her decor ideas on her own home

What does a typical day as an interior designer look like?

'It varies between quiet days at home working on mood boards, to long days out on the road visiting clients and sourcing items.'

How do you decorate your home at Christmas?

'I love to use nature. Last year my white hydrangeas dried a beautiful deep red, with hints of green. I picked them and turned them into a table centrepiece.'

Has living in the countryside influenced your work?

'Yes. I like to bring different styles together in a mix of country and city elegance. I also use more natural materials now.'

FEATURE JANIE BOWLES PHOTOGRAPHS JODY STEWART



CONVERTED COACH HOUSE

ALL IS CALM

A tasteful combination of statement lighting, sumptuous fabrics and glimmering wallpapers envelop this beautiful home with peace, elegance and charm

WORDS ANDRÉE FRIEZE PHOTOGRAPHS JODY STEWART

HALL

With its pale hues and flagstone flooring (left), the hall is, at first glance, a country house classic. But in her inimitable way Laura Butler-Madden has given the space a contemporary touch with an unconventional lighting choice and witty photographs. **Vintage chandelier**, Marmorea, marmorealondon.com. **Anna cabinet**, £4,723, Julian Chichester, julianchichester.com. **Blue hydrangeas, conifers, moss and dried palm seeds wreath**, from £295, Pulbrook & Gould, pulbrookandgould.co.uk.

LIVING AREA

The minstrel's gallery used to be at the opposite end of this large room but, as Laura and Patrick wanted to place the kitchen there, they had it moved and its balustrade replaced to match that of the spiral staircase in the corner. **Vintage Sputnik light**, Marmorea, marmorealondon.com. **Toulouse coffee table**, £1,375, Oka, oka.com. **Crumpet sofas** in French Grey brushed cotton, £1,595 each, Loaf, loaf.com. **Porden wallpaper** in Pearl, £59 a roll, Designers Guild, designersguild.com. **Ribbons**, Jane Means, janemeans.com.





After taking on an early-Victorian coach house near Sherborne, Dorset, that had been converted into flats, Laura and Patrick Butler-Madden set about restoring its original proportions. Here, Laura shares how they embraced its singular character yet gave it an aesthetic that is distinctly their own.

What attracted you to this property? Patrick went to school in Dorset and I grew up here, so we had always thought about moving to this part of the world. However, finding this place happened in a rather serendipitous fashion. We had been living in London, developing property, but with the change in the tax situation, we decided to refocus on our other careers, Patrick as a

photographer and me as a design and lifestyle blogger. I am always scouring property websites and I spotted this unique building that was in need of love. It had been split into flats, divided up among members of the same family, and had not been updated since the 1970s.

We decided to go and see the house and were inspired by the huge space that was originally the stables in the middle of the house. That was the moment. All of a sudden, we could see ourselves making something exceptional. Creating open-plan space is easier to do in a townhouse than it is in a country home, but having this incredibly large room made it simpler for us.

Was the extent of the project a new challenge? It was bigger than anything we had ever done before, but

DINING AREA

Originally, curtains were hung above the sash windows but, for a dramatic flourish, Laura opted to hang new ones (left) from the cornice to accentuate the high ceiling. **Curtains** in Saverne in Viola, £79m, Designers Guild, designersguild.com. **Walls** in Pearl Ashes matt emulsion, £39.50 for 2.5L, Fired Earth, firedearth.com. **Candles**, Bolsius, bolsius.com.

KITCHEN

Patrick's decision to forgo wall cabinets, except for a plate rack above the sink, allows the scale of this space to be fully appreciated. The couple chose this marble for its whiteness and the gold flecks it contains, and specified an extra-deep slab for the island so it would not feel lost. **Worktop** in Calacatta Oro marble, around \$650sq m including fitting, MG Granite, mggranite.co.uk.

as there was no major construction work involved, it was a little less challenging. It was a matter of replacing the roof, replumbing and rewiring throughout, digging up the ground floor to put in underfloor heating and replacing all the windows.

Describe your vision for the interior. Overall, we were keen to maintain the original features, or put them back in where necessary, and we wanted the house to look elegant but contemporary, without sacrificing any of its character. The building is neither farmhouse nor classic country home, which gave us free rein with the overall style, but for the kitchen we wanted to avoid anything that would look too utilitarian or that would detract from the high ceiling and the beautiful cornicing.

How does your design process work? Once I have painted and papered a room, I add in the furniture; I usually get it right first time but in the summer room, I did have to send back two sofas before I felt I had achieved the look I wanted. My style is a mixture of 1960s Palm Springs, Scandinavian and contemporary country elegance with the occasional touch of Art Deco glamour thanks to the lighting. I err towards calm colours to create a soft and gentle atmosphere, except in the snug, where I plumped for an intense blue. I wanted a really cosy room for the winter and I hankered after a Zoffany paint called Prussian Blue that I had seen used in a restaurant. I tried it but it did not suit the space so I used Zoffany's Reign Blue instead; it has an amazing texture, a bit like velvet, and creates the perfect ambience.



SUMMER ROOM

French doors were installed to allow the couple to take full advantage of the impressive valley views and glorious sunsets that this room enjoys. A vintage desk and chair add warm tones to the study (below right), which leads off this elegant space.

Oscar corner sofa in Pebble Vintage Linen, £3,035 Loaf, loaf.com. **Hepburn armchair**, £567, Sweetpea & Willow, sweetpeaandwillow.com. **Delphine bar**, £2,995, Jonathan Adler, uk.jonathanadler.com.

UTILITY ROOM

Laura's glamorous touch even extends to this practical space (right), which is decorated with an eye-catching gold bug wallpaper.

Buggie wallpaper, around £74 yard, Abnormals Anonymous, abnormalsanonymous.com.







LANDING

Plants add colour and vitality to the landing (left), which leads to the main bedroom.

Hascombe Artichoke lamp base, from £86,

Laura Ashley, lauraashley.com. **Jasmine inlay stool** in grey, £235, Lombok, lombok.co.uk.

MAIN BATHROOM

A pharmacist's cabinet (below left) makes a novel yet eminently stylish storage solution.

Pharmacist's cabinet, ebay.com. **Brass circle with flat mirror plate**, from £1,135sq m, Looking Glass of Bath, lookinglassofbath.co.uk.

MAIN BEDROOM

'The large proportions of the room prevent the scale of this botanical wallpaper from overwhelming the space,' says Laura.

Contemporary Restyled Palm wallpaper 95/1008, £76 a roll, Cole & Son, cole-and-son.com.



MAIN BATHROOM

With no original bathroom to work with, Laura was able to design this room in its entirety. 'We've used wooden flooring from Marmorea a lot because we like the colours and the quality.' Herringbone engineered oak flooring in Stone Age White, £83sq m, Marmorea, marmorealondon.com. Madeira cast-iron double-ended bath, £3,750; Victoria double console basin, £759; both Heritage Bathrooms, heritagebathrooms.com.