



RIVERSIDE RETREAT

JULIE AND MARK RINGLAND'S HOLIDAY HOME IS A GRAND HOUSE ON A SMALL SCALE, AND IS SURROUNDED BY WATERSIDE WILDLIFE



DINING ROOM

The dining room is a bright and airy space, with a table that seats 10, one dining chair that came from Chapmans. The view from the window (below left, on the banks of the River Coquet, which flows through the back of her home) is a beautiful sight. Find the leather chair at House of Fraser +

WHAT WE LOVE MOST...

“The beauty of the area and the wildlife on the doorstep – there are seals in the river just outside the house. It is so peaceful.”

NOT MANY PEOPLE are able to watch seals and otters playing in the river from the comfort of their own home, but Julie Ringland's village house stands at the edge of a quiet stretch of the River Coquet in Northumberland and seeing the wildlife is all part of the property's charm.

'Mark and I fell completely in love with the house long before we actually owned it,' she says. The couple had bought the small cottage next door as part of their portfolio of Northumberland holiday homes and often told the owners how much their visitors enjoyed looking out on to its pretty garden.

'We'd admired it for years and always said to each other how we would love to live there,' says Julie. 'I had been inside just once, and hadn't been upstairs, but I had seen enough to know it was absolutely gorgeous. It has a warm and solid feel to it, and the Georgian windows are so big that the views are just magnificent – they seem to fill each room. When the house came up for sale, we put an offer in within a day of finding out, we were that keen.'

The magic of the house, she says, lies in its elegance. 'It is like a grand house on a small and simple scale,' she says, and she used this as her inspiration when planning the redecoration. 'I wanted it to have a classic country house feel, but I didn't want it to be stuffy and formal.'

Another irresistible feature is its quiriness. 'The whole village is basically built on sand so a lot of the houses are higgledy piggledy,' she says. 'You don't notice it downstairs but, in the front bedrooms, you can feel the lean when you stand still. Most of the village houses are crooked in some way – it's not a structural problem, just part of the character of an old house.'

The previous owners had recently refitted the kitchen, laid underfloor heating and decorated the ground floor so Julie and Mark were happy to continue where they had left off. Their biggest project was the bathroom, which hadn't been touched since the 1970s. The floor here was lifted and reinforced with thick plywood, ready for new limestone tiles and a luxuriously large bath. The remainder of the work in the house was mostly cosmetic and Julie has chosen a collection of muted colours. 'I am generally drawn



DRAWING ROOM The woodburning stove creates a cosy focal point. The sofa and matching armchair came from Barker & Stonehouse, as did the club-style armchair (above right) and the Vietnamese console table (right). The seagrass flooring came from Crucial Trading; the rug from Dunelm Mill. The Northumberland landscapes are by one of Julie's favourite artists, Clifford William Blakey.



AT HOME WITH...

OWNERS Julie Ringland, who runs a luxury holiday cottage business, her husband Mark, who is director of a scaffolding company, plus their children Stephanie, 15, and Miles, 11, and Ella, the Great Dane

HOUSE Eighteenth-century village house bought in 2007 as a weekend retreat

ROOMS Kitchen, dining room, drawing room, laundry room, three bedrooms, two bathrooms, en-suite washroom ▶



GUEST BEDROOM For similar dramatic black wallpaper (top) try Romo or Osborne & Little. The paint (above) is Ivory Spray by Johnstone's Paint; the French-style painted furniture came from The Gosforth Fine Company; the twin beds zip together to create a superking-sized bed with headboards from The Original Bedstead Company. The bedlinen came from Dorma; the purple throws from Matalan.

towards cream, taupe, and mushroom shades,' she says, 'and I love ivory, pale greens and the blue which is almost a turquoise that we have used in our bedroom.' Black is a favourite accent colour and she uses it to dramatic effect. 'Decorating this house was exciting because it was bigger than the other projects we have done and, this time, it was for us,' she says. 'I love the idea of finding unusual things and not necessarily paying the earth for them. It's not just about the budget – it's about the fun of pulling things together, picking some really high quality pieces and then finding bargains and things from auctions.'

One of Julie's best buys was the elegant bergère bed in the main bedroom. 'I was looking for a 5ft version of this bed and none of the suppliers I tried could get their hands on one,' she says. 'So I looked on eBay and found someone selling a 6ft version, which was even better. It is brand new and should have been £1,300 but it was only £500.'

Now that the house is completed, Julie and the family love to spend weekends here. 'It is a peaceful house,' she says. 'The sun moves round it flooding each of the rooms with light as the day goes on. It's instantly relaxing. This house has always had a special tranquil feeling. It's something you can't put your finger on – it just has a warm, family atmosphere.'

If you would like to stay in one of Julie's holiday cottages in Northumberland, call 0191 388 3752 or visit coquetcottages.co.uk.

ON OUR DOORSTEP... NORTHUMBERLAND

Julie and Mark Ringland recommend their favourite local haunts

VISIT... 'The landscaped gardens at the Duchess of Northumberland's wonderful project, The Alnwick Garden (01665 511350, alnwickgarden.com). If you fancy a walk, Warkworth beach has miles of soft, golden sands backed by dunes. Northumberland has the most wonderful beaches and castles, and it still feels undiscovered'

SHOP AT... 'New Barns Farm Shop (01665 710035) on the outskirts of Warkworth for wonderful food from local producers including nationally renowned meat'

GO FOR A MEAL AT... 'The Jackdaw (01665 711488) in Warkworth, run by husband and wife team Rupert and Gillian Bell, for excellent home-cooked English fare. They grow lots of their own vegetables and source their meat locally. We also like The Mason's Arms (01665 711398) in Warkworth – it's a proper Northumbrian pub with low beams and an open fire'

WHAT MAKES THIS HOUSE A HOME

It has a history, a real sense of place, it's solid, dependable and cherished and it's spacious, is very cosy and welcoming.

With its original features, this was a high quality, well-kept house. A lovely, solid, dependable and cherished home. It's spacious, is very cosy and welcoming.

www.foxtons.co.uk

ROOM IDEAS



GET THE LOOK

RE-CREATE THE STYLE OF JULIE AND MARK RINGLAND'S GLAMOROUS **BEDROOM**

ABOVE The Ringlands' bed was an eBay bargain. For similar, try the Classical by Sweetpea & Willow (from £660); the Ivory Rattan by Frances Hunt (from £925); or the Mirabelle by John Lewis (£775).



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- 1 Fleur dressing mirror, H65cm by W62cm, £185, Chic Shack.
- 2 Beaded fringe, from £2.04 a metre, British Trimmings.
- 3 Jasmine tea candle, £18, True Grace.
- 4 Bergonzi wallpaper, ref NCW4013-01, col Aqua, £42 a roll, Nina Campbell at Osborne & Little.
- 5 Antique table lamp, H60cm, £23.99, Dunelm Mill.
- 6 Provençal Foot End bench, H64cm by W132cm by D49cm, £355, The French Bedroom Company.
- 7 Isabella cushion, 60cm by 30cm, £30; Isabella throw, 220cm square, £175, both col Aqua, Christy.
- 8 Carpets, from left: cols Antelope and Champagne, both £53 a square metre, Velvet range, Ulster Carpets.

SEE PAGE 147 FOR PHONE NUMBERS AND WEBSITES

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