



ALL PICTURES In the drawing room, the use of differently patterned textiles, among them a large wall hanging (above left), complements the eclectic collection of furniture, which includes a Julian Chichester coffee table and a trompe l'oeil-painted cupboard from Graham Carr (below centre)

# SUNNY SIDE

USING A PALETTE OF YELLOWS, CREAMS AND CANTALOUPE MELON, A DESIGNER HAS CREATED A PRETTY FAMILY HOME IN A TURRETED, VICTORIAN RED-BRICK HOUSE IN SOUTH LONDON



PHOTOGRAPHS: © CHRISTOPHER DRAKE (RED COVER)



THIS PAGE In the kitchen, differently shaped glass vases filled with flowers add interest to a table surrounded by chairs from HRW Antiques (left). Beyond, a scarlet longcase clock stands below an oak corner cupboard. The blue-and-white gingham blind and gingham-edged cream curtains (right) were chosen to complement Charlotte's collection of blue-and-white china

Once upon a time in south London stood a light-filled, miniature 'castle'. Within a tree-crammed garden behind a tall, brick wall, this large Victorian house – complete with fairy-tale turrets and wide windows – is now home to interior designer Charlotte Lane Fox, her husband Bruce Ellis (who works for the ultimate fairy-tale factory, Walt Disney) and their three daughters, Matilda, eight, Tabitha, six, and Jemima, two.

Having previously lived in an eighteenth-century cottage in Belgravia, Charlotte and Bruce decided it was time to move on and find a real family home with a garden and plenty of space. South London seemed the ideal location, with many of their friends living in the area, Charlotte's office close by and a variety of parks and green spaces in which to walk the family's two miniature dachshunds.

'I was distraught when we had to leave the cottage,' recalls Charlotte, who runs an interior-design business with her mother, designer Prue Lane Fox, 'but as soon as I walked in here I saw how it could be. It's the nearest we'll ever have to living in a country house in London, and it's quite different from anything else, which is really important to me.'

Seven years ago, the house didn't exude an iota of its current magic and was unrecognizable from how it looks today. Instead of the sequence of generously sized rooms decorated in a palette of sunny colours and with a mix of elegant antiques and pretty knick-knacks, the house was split into three flats – one on each floor – in various states of repair.

'Only one flat was on the market at the time,' explains Charlotte, 'and we battled and battled to buy the rest of the house. I was pregnant with my second child and working on various projects, so it was a really busy time.'

Charlotte initially applied for planning permission for a large extension downstairs. When this was refused, she decided to knock the centre of the ground floor into a spacious kitchen/dining room and painted the walls fresh yellow accompanied by her favourite blue-and-white accessories.

On the same floor are the drawing room – its cantaloupe-melon-coloured walls partnered by richly upholstered furniture and patterned curtains – and the study, in which parchment-coloured walls display a mishmash of pictures, paintings and ornate mirrors.

'The house is traditional and cosy and colourful,' enthuses Charlotte, whose 20-year-long design career kicked off with a holiday job at Charles Hammond and two years at Colefax and Fowler. 'I love clutter and I'm a real hoarder of things. I'm better at telling people how to declutter than doing it myself.'

The first floor houses the main bedroom, dressing room and bathroom. The bedroom's four-poster bed is new – designed and painted by Graham Carr and hung with silk and a decorative Pierre Frey fabric. The large bathroom is a far cry from today's ubiquitous ultramodern 'white-and-chrome' combination. Instead, Charlotte has combined a Colefax and Fowler wallpaper with rugs and a comfortable armchair.

Next door, Jemima's pretty toile-de-Jouy-lined bedroom is every little girl's dream, with its wooden sleigh bed, miniature armchair and tiled fireplace. Charlotte also managed to fit in a separate shower room, spare bedroom and bathroom. But it is upstairs, where Tabitha and Matilda have their bedrooms, that the home really takes on a magical quality. In one turret, the girls' bathroom is lined with a Designers Guild flowerpot-patterned paper, while the second turret contains their bedrooms.

'You can't make a house overnight,' says Charlotte. 'But after seven years this is a real family home' □  
Charlotte Lane Fox (tel: 020-7627 3311)



THIS PAGE In the main bedroom, the four-poster bed is hung with silk from the Rainbow Silk Company and lined with 'Taj Mahal' by Braquenié, from Pierre Frey (above). Among the ornamental items in the bathroom, which is hung with Colefax and Fowler 'Berkeley Sprig' wallpaper, is a decoupage folding screen and a photograph of Charlotte's father, garden designer Martin Lane Fox (below left and middle). Jemima's bedroom is decorated with 'Vauxhall Gardens' toile de Jouy from Lewis & Wood (below right)

