

Relaxed, friendly LODGE LIVING

For Christopher and Christine Thome, their home in the country had to be able to withstand daily life working with horses, but smart enough for entertaining

FEATURE HELEN CHISLETT PHOTOGRAPHS DAVID GILES

There are not many country properties that offer accommodation for two people, one dog and 10 ponies, so when Christopher and Christine Thome happened across a shooting lodge with an apartment above and stables below, they knew it was the place for them. Both are keen amateur polo players, so when the weekend comes, they leave London and head straight for Wiltshire and the thrill of the polo field, accompanied by their Rhodesian Ridgeback, Trouble.

Christopher moved here from Germany three years ago, but quickly became a convert to the English way of life. 'I love the countryside and the beer.' Soon after he began playing polo, he met Christine, and they were married last year.

The shooting lodge is a handsome red brick building, dating from the late 19th century, but inside it was very neglected. The kitchen and bathroom were run-down and most of the

1 The Thomes love entertaining, and this open-plan dining room suits them perfectly. Above the table is a light made from an antique carriage harness, from Tony Harley Decorative Antiques.

2 The kitchen was designed by Henriette von Stockhausen, and made from heavy MDF topped with iroko wood. The marble splashback tiles from World's End Tiles contrast with the rich, deep red of the walls.

3 Some of the Thomes' trophies displayed in the dining room, offset by Ralph Lauren red Raffia wallpaper.

4 The Thomes and their polo ponies.

5 The first floor of this handsome shooting lodge has been converted into an elegant apartment. The stables are below.



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The owners

Christopher and Christine Thome moved in with their 10 ponies and their dog, Trouble.

The property

Built: late 19th century.
Location: Wiltshire.
Materials: traditional brick construction.
Rooms: (in the upstairs apartment) open-plan kitchen and dining room, drawing room, bedroom and bathroom. (On the ground floor) large hall, stables, guest lodge.



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rooms were too dark. The fireplaces were blocked up, there was Lino covering the original floorboards and the boiler was in the drawing room. We decided to redo it from scratch,' says Christopher.

Neither he nor Christine had time to take on the project, so they called on the help of a friend. Henriette von Stockhausen, who owns an interior design company, VSP Interiors. She was given carte blanche to do exactly as she thought right – 'We ripped everything out, so there was just one big empty space; we then reconfigured the whole thing entirely.'

The restored building now has an open-plan kitchen and dining room, drawing room, bedroom and bathroom. Below is a spacious ground floor hall where the Thomes' extensive collection of riding equipment is kept. When it came to decoration,

Designer tip

As the Thomes' kitchen-cum-dining-room shows, traditional furniture works with state-of-the-art appliances. Fisher & Paykel's DishDrawer, a dishwasher that pulls out like a drawer, fits well in this country setting. Call 0845 600 1934.

Trade secrets

Be it stables or noisy neighbours sound-proof insulation is advisable. There are three main solutions: foam acoustilay; a layer of compressed polystyrene boards; or a floating floor, for particularly noisy situations. Visit www.insulation-installers.co.uk.

Henriette created a gentleman's club style for the rooms, using vintage leather chairs, panelled walls, working fireplaces and the original polished oak floors. She scoured auctions, antiques shops and design emporiums looking for furniture and accessories that would suit the lodge's character.

The Thomes were travelling at the time and didn't see their newly revived home until the day it was complete. They were thrilled. As Christopher says: 'We wanted something relaxed and friendly – we wouldn't change a thing.' CH&I

USEFUL SOURCES

And So To Bed 0808 144 4343; Tony Harley Decorative Antiques 020 7610 2694; VSP Interiors 020 8741 7771; World's End Tiles 020 7819 2110.



1 The door to the Thomes' hall; stairs lead from here to the first floor apartment.

2 Polo equipment is arranged in the ground floor hall to become a feature.

3 The drawing room has real warmth, with panelled walls and comfortable Kingcome sofas covered in Ralph Lauren linen. On the floor is a midnight blue pony skin rug – one of the many equestrian references in the apartment.

4 This metal bed from And So To Bed is cleverly designed to look like stitched leather. Toile wallpaper, an Aubusson tapestry, antique prints and old trunks complete the country look.

5 Classic, striped wallpaper sets the tone in the bathroom, with its vintage basin and antique silver gilt mirror.