



# HISTORY LESSON

A crumbling period property has been painstakingly restored to create this stunning home where the past sits comfortably alongside the present

Report: **Kathy Hurst**





It's hard to believe that Anne and Robert Smith's imposing West Sussex home – with its classic Georgian red-brick façade, sash windows and luxurious interior – was once in a state of complete disrepair. When the couple took possession of the house, which has Tudor origins, and Georgian and Victorian additions, it was divided into three separate units and in danger of collapsing.

"The core of the building dates from 1500 and many of the beams and columns in the central structure were rotten and suffering from beetle infestation," explains Carlos Dublanc, architect and director of Dublanc Studio, who masterminded the restoration. "We worked closely with English Heritage during the build. The aim throughout was to achieve a luxurious, modern interior whilst preserving the building's accumulative history – the Tudor, Georgian and Victorian phases of its development."

Once Carlos's plans had been approved, the Smiths embarked on a multi-million-pound renovation. Remedial work was undertaken to the structure of the house and it was returned to a single dwelling. A badly built Victorian extension was taken down and reconstructed, and the restoration team also painstakingly salvaged and restored as much of the original timber framework as possible. "Amazingly, most of the main Tudor timbers had remained intact and we decided to make a feature of them wherever possible," says Carlos.

With the building strengthened and reconfigured, Carlos and his team set to work on creating a glamorous interior, including a master suite and six ensuite bedrooms which allow the Smiths to accommodate their extensive circle of friends. "My clients enjoy entertaining and wanted to create numerous bedroom suites, each with their own unique identity," Carlos explains. "We've used a variety of



**Opening page (p155):** A studded upholstered headboard, silk bed spread and cushions in contrasting metallic shades contribute to the luxurious theme.

**Top left:** Newly restored sash windows flood this large guest bedroom with natural light.

**Top right:** These beautiful glass door handles reflect the interior's classic-contemporary feel.

**Above right:** A bespoke paint effect lends this panelling – part of the original fabric of the property – a modern look.





high-end, natural materials – marble, oak and stone – as well as some unusual bespoke finishes which really do justice to a building of this calibre.”

Such is the case in the master bathroom, constructed in the new rear extension. An opulent, masculine space boasting a double walk-in shower, the room also features an expansive tub recessed into a marble-clad frame, plus tiles which have been hand-sprayed by a craftsman commissioned by Carlos that shimmer in the light. The marble used both on the walls and bath surround was sourced from a rare Swiss quarry. “It’s very rich in mica, which gives it a wonderful patina and nicely complements the metal tones of the tiled shower enclosure,” says Carlos.

This luxurious feel is carried through into the guest suites. “In the bathroom that faces the garden we were able to incorporate the old exterior wall and original timber frame into the design,” says Carlos. “It’s a fantastic room, with an antique copper bath positioned at the window to take advantage of the view.” Indeed, the atmospheric space – with its wall of mirrors, thick jacquard curtains and interlocking floor tiles sprayed in different tones of copper and bronze – has the air of a gentlemen’s club. “The geometric tiles are a distinctive Tudor shape, which provides a neat visual link to the building’s history,” Carlos explains. “We also fitted a lovely eglomise mirror; silver leaf is applied to the reverse of the glass which gives it a fabulous vintage look.”

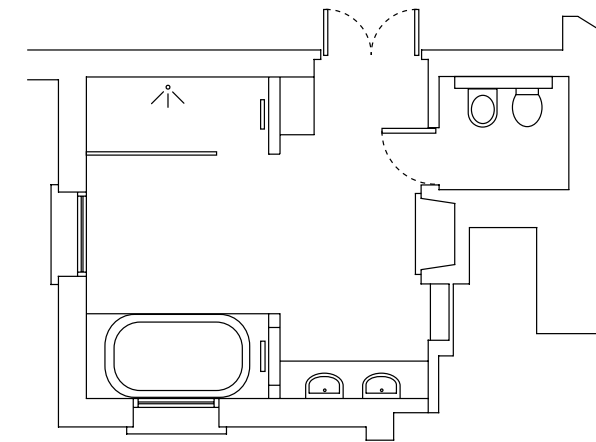
Even in the more contemporary suites, the building’s Tudor origins are clearly evident, notably in the form of a recessed enamel bath and wall-hung



**Opposite page:** Metallic tiles and marble sourced from a rare Swiss quarry give the double walk-in shower enclosure a truly luxurious feel.

**Left:** “Most of the brassware is from Grohe,” says Carlos. “We tend to recommend it as a brand as it really does combine style and reliability.”

**Below:** A large flat-screen TV sits flush with the wall at the end of the bath, ensuring this opulent master bathroom offers both modern-day convenience and period charm.







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bidet and WC, skilfully juxtaposed with exposed brick and timber. “The bones of this building are so striking that we often opted for understated fixtures and fittings,” Carlos notes. “In the bathroom which faces the front of the property, for instance, the furniture is quite simple in style and teamed with subtle natural materials like oak and slate.”

Indeed, the guest bedroom at the front of the property, which is connected to the master suite via lockable double doors, epitomises the ethos of this renovation. A bright, airy room with lofty sash windows looking out onto a wide high street, it is a sophisticated blend of period charm and modern style. An upholstered headboard and bedside lamps in chic slate shades rest easily with antique armoires and expertly restored panelling. “The look here, as in the house as a whole, is very much classic-contemporary,” says Carlos. “The brief was to create a calming space so we incorporated storage behind the panelling so any clutter can be hidden away. We also worked with specialist decorators who applied subtle paint effects to the restored oak as the clients shared my view that traditional panelled rooms can sometimes feel overwhelming.”

Whilst there were undoubtedly challenges in integrating the concept of an accumulated history with a pleasing aesthetic, Carlos is proud of what he and his team have achieved. “The circulation through the house is now much more agreeable and the bathrooms – with their bespoke fittings and finishes – are a real joy,” he says. “I feel privileged to have been involved in giving this building a new lease of life and in giving the owners such a special home in which to entertain.” [KBB]

**Opposite page:** “When it came to the WC we thought the porcelain look would compete with the palette of oak, brick and copper so we created what is known as a ‘thunderbox’,” says Carlos. “Hence the WC is clad in oak and treated with the same bronzed finish as the vanity unit.”

**Above:** The bath’s traditional shape neatly complements other period features, such as the eglomise mirror and Tudor-inspired geometric floor tiles.





**Left:** Understated sanitaryware and furniture allow traditional features, such as exposed timbers and original brickwork, to take centre stage.

**Below:** A stylish blend of the classic and contemporary make for a striking space. "I love the way that the brickwork here – part of an original Tudor wall – sits alongside a large, modern walk-in shower enclosure," Carlos remarks.



## SourceBook

### DESIGN

**Design, cabinetry and installation** Dublanc Studio (020 7402 0607 or [www.dublanc-studio.com](http://www.dublanc-studio.com))

### BEDROOM

**Flooring** Solid oak boards, Wide Oak Flooring (01903 892012 or [www.wide-oakflooring.com](http://www.wide-oakflooring.com))

**Paint** Strong White Modern Emulsion, Farrow & Ball (01202 876141 or [www.farrow-ball.com](http://www.farrow-ball.com))

**Bedstead** For similar try the Billow range from Loaf (020 8968 8843 or [www.loaf.com](http://www.loaf.com))

**Bedding** For similar try the Chenevard silk quilt from Designers Guild (020 7893 7720 or [www.designersguild.com](http://www.designersguild.com))

**Lamps** For similar try Porta Romana (01420 23005 or [www.portaromana.co.uk](http://www.portaromana.co.uk))

**Dressing table** For similar try the Floral Desk from And So To Bed (0808 144 4343 or [www.andstobed.co.uk](http://www.andstobed.co.uk))

**Bedside tables** For similar try the Pompidou range, Oka (0844 815 7380 or [www.okadirect.com](http://www.okadirect.com))

**Curtains** For similar try the Arundale range from Designers Guild, as before

### MASTER BATHROOM

#### Shower, white steel bath and towel rail

CP Hart (0845 873 1121 or [www.cphart.co.uk](http://www.cphart.co.uk))

**Bath and basin taps** Grohe (0871 200 3414 or [www.grohe.co.uk](http://www.grohe.co.uk))

**Tiles** Decorative bronze stone floor, quartz stone shower enclosure and honed quartz bath surround, Decorum Est (07572 151607 or [www.decorumest.co.uk](http://www.decorumest.co.uk))

**Shower screen** Drom (01932 355655 or [www.dromuk.com](http://www.dromuk.com))

**Bench** For similar try the upholstered Handel bench from And So To Bed, as before

### GUEST BATHROOM 1

**Copper bath** Augustus Brandt (01798 344722 or [www.augustus-brandt-antiques.co.uk](http://www.augustus-brandt-antiques.co.uk))

**Brasware** Devon & Devon (+39 553989444 or [www.devon-devon.com](http://www.devon-devon.com))

#### Bespoke mirror and vanity unit

Woodworks of Westerham (01959 571557 or [www.wood-works.co.uk](http://www.wood-works.co.uk))

**Floor tiles** Bronze ottoman and copper dot repeat floor with copper border, Decorum Est, as before

**Curtains** For similar try Fabrics & Papers (01273 495500 or [www.fabricsandpapers.com](http://www.fabricsandpapers.com))

### GUEST BATHROOM 2

**Bath** Jazz Solo steel bath, CP Hart, as before

**Shower, wall-hung WC and bidet, and towel rail** All CP Hart, as before

**Floor** Un-pigmented bronze shagreen tiles, Decorum Est, as before

**Wall** Natural colour match shagreen tiles, Decorum Est, as before

**Bath tiles** Grey Purbeck stone brushed tiles, Decorum Est, as before

### COST

A similar bedroom would cost around £10,000, a similar master bathroom around £70,000, and similar guest bathrooms from £20,000 each