



RIVERSIDE HOME

A NEW ERA

This Georgian town house overlooking the River Thames has been expertly renovated and styled to combine modern convenience with echoes of the past

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During the 18th century, poets, philosophers and radicals gathered in this white house by the river. Balcony doors were flung open and the long ballroom rang with the noise of debate and gossip. As the sun set, candles were lit, a harpsichordist struck up a dance tune and slippered feet flew across floorboards into the small hours of the morning.

Fast forward to the present day and the west London house overlooking the River Thames is now a family home to Virginia and James Turnbull and their three children, Aidan, Savannah and Scarlett. Candlelight has been replaced by electricity, but thanks to a thoughtful refurbishment by designer Mammela Hamillford, the house has lost none of its Georgian charm.

Stepping barefoot across the floorboards, American-born Virginia admits that finding this house was pure luck. "We were renting nearby and weren't really looking for a home, but one day James spotted this house online," she says. Visiting it a few days later, the Turnbells were smitten by its sense of history. "The house was built in the 1760s on the site of a boathouse, but it has hardly changed since then," says Virginia, who grew up on a farm in Virginia, USA. "We fell in love with the squeaky floorboards and beautiful staircase, as well as the greenery in summer and river views," she says.

The decorating brief was clear. "Virginia wanted to respect the character of the house, while updating things to feel soft and serene," says Mammela. Much of the design inspiration came from the nearby river. "It is such a big part of the property, we wanted to evoke the colours and reflective play of light on water," says Virginia. A concert of silvery blues and greens enhances the flow of the house, luring you in to explore. Not simply decorative, the latest palette, which replaced bright cobalts and yellows, draws on history. The fresco-like wallpaper in the entrance hall, for instance, was inspired by the 18th-century Governor's Mansion in Williamsburg where Virginia studied International Relations. A bespoke mirrored console by Rupert Bevan ("a motorbike-riding mirror genius" quips Virginia) exudes antique appeal. "I call it the jewellery of the house," she adds. In the dining room, silvery cherry-blossom wallpaper is a

nod to Georgian chinoiserie, while in the drawing room duck-egg blue damask and faded Robert Kime silk cushions evoke the desired "air of age".

Previous owners had done the nitty-gritty work, adding the classical conservatory at the back and putting in the kind of storage fit for a luxury yacht. "For us it was a case of balancing modernisation with respect for the architecture," says Virginia. In the extension, an island for the family to perch at replaced a formal table, while terracotta tiles were swapped for a pale blue design. Chunky shelves replaced skimpy versions and mirrors softened cupboards. Upstairs in the bedrooms, with their river views, murals were traded for wallpaper and the girls' beds were framed with pink curtaining fit for Georgian princesses.

Everywhere, original details have been restored. Floorboards were sanded down and filled using a paste made from the sawdust (guests are now advised to leave stilettos behind after one Jimmy Choo came unstuck), while doors were stripped back to wood and tinted a delicate green to match the tones of the nearby landmark Victorian bridge. The twirling fruitwood staircase was also restored and reinforced to bear the weight of removal men shouldering the grand piano, inherited from James's late father, David Turnbull, a distinguished musician, up to the drawing room.

Reaching the 35-foot-wide piano nobile, Virginia points to another historic survivor: the cracked plaster walls and cornice, picked out in red and green to match the bridge. Everything else, however, was transformed. "It had to be formal and child friendly; a place for black-tie events and watching television, which was not easy," confides Mammela. The solution was to zone the space. On one side, the piano gleams against a wall of antiqued mirrors, while high-backed sofas and French armchairs exude salon elegance. On the other side, a maple cupboard hides the television and drinks cabinet, while a low coffee table and velvety sofas "feel like a hug", says Virginia. Overhead, the chandelier, another 18th-century original, was electrified "in a shameful but necessary moment", confesses Virginia. In many ways, the setting has altered little since its salon days and on warm summer evenings, guests still spill out on to the long terrace, lured by the ebb and flow of the river. □

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DINING ROOM

A silvery wallpaper was chosen to reflect the evening light that bounces off the Thames. Nicolai dining chairs, £449 each. Oka, 0844 815 7380. okadirect.com. Chairs in Sans in Mauve, £104m; similar seat fabric. Keats

in Aubergine, £23m; both Manuel Canovas, 020 7244 7427, manuelcanovas.com. Dante chandeliers, £140 each. John Lewis, 0345 604 9049, johnlewis.com. Seasonal flowers by Rosie Ansell, Rosie Twine, 020 3287 8033, rosieandtwine.com.



DRAWING ROOM
Originally a ballroom, this space has a formal seating area (shown here) backed by a wall of antiqued glass, with a more relaxed sitting area at the opposite end. Bespoke antiqued mirror glass, Rupert Bevan, 020 7731 1919, rupertbevan.com; French armchairs in Chevron, Jute and Metro Plaster, £600 each by Design, 01523 756699, [JUNE 2015 | 1129 | 97](http://jerkdesigns.com</p></div><div data-bbox=)



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CONSERVATORY

With plenty of storage for crockery and an island-cum-breakfast bar, the conservatory (above) is not only the gateway to the 150-foot-long garden, it is also a favoured gathering point for family and friends.

Similar floor tiles. Toulouse in Augustins, 20cm sq, £224.70m, Fired Earth, 0845 293 8798, firedearth.com.

ENTRANCE HALL

Having had its original floors, doors and staircase restored, the entrance hall (above right) looks almost as it would have done when the house was built in the 1760s.

Similar lighting. Bonham lantern, from £238, Jim Lawrence, 09473 826685, jim-lawrence.co.uk.

BATHROOM

Mirrored glass features in the doors that lead to this classically decorated top-floor room (right) overlooking the garden.

Similar bath. Imperium roll-top bath, from £1,943, Albion Bath Company, 01225 833605, albionbathco.com.







STUDY

To create a club-like ambience for James's study (left), the original doors and panelling were stripped of their layers of paint and given a limed appearance. **Chair** in Vintage Slate leather, £132m, Fox Linton, 020 7368 7700, foxlinton.com. **Similar cushion fabric**, Ragamuffin, £234m, de Le Cuona, 020 7584 7677, delecuaona.co.uk. **For a similar antique apothecary chest**, try Andrew Bewick, 020 7385 9025, lillieroad.co.uk.

DRAWING ROOM

In the family seating area (above), a bespoke cabinet made of bird's-eye maple and lined with marble and antiqued glass houses the bar and television. **Bespoke rug and cabinet**, both Hamiford Design, 07940 426346, hamiforddesign.com. **Thread lamps**, £1,782 each; **shades**, £214 each; all Porta Romana, 01420 23005, portaromana.co.uk. **Bespoke sofa** in Empire Moss, £85m, Mark Alexander, 01623 756699, markalexander.com.

COVERED TERRACE

Spanning the full width of the house, one end of this space (right) is decorated with the bow and stern of a rowing boat, a nod to the University Boat Race, which takes place nearby every year. **Norway sofa**, from £2,257, Robert Langford, 0845 009 0203, robertlangford.co.uk. **Avignon coffee table**, £465, Oka, 0844 815 7380, okadirect.com.



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MAIN BEDROOM

Pretty fabric-lined walls and soft curtaining (above), which can be drawn for a more intimate feel, provide an air of luxury in this inviting room. Similar wallcovering: Adele, £47m, Sanderson, 0844 534 4600, sanderson-uk.com.

SAVANNAH'S BEDROOM

This built-in cabin bed (left), with its bright pink-and-black colour scheme and curtains for warmth, offers storage above and below. Similar wallpaper: Beaton Beauties in Rouge, £48-a-roll, Beadesert London, 0845 838 8720, cecilbeatonfabrics.com.

